



**PreK to 3
Design
Team**

**REPORT
January
2017**

**Moving to
Mixed Delivery,
Voluntary
Preschool for
Four Year Olds:
An Approach for
Minnesota**



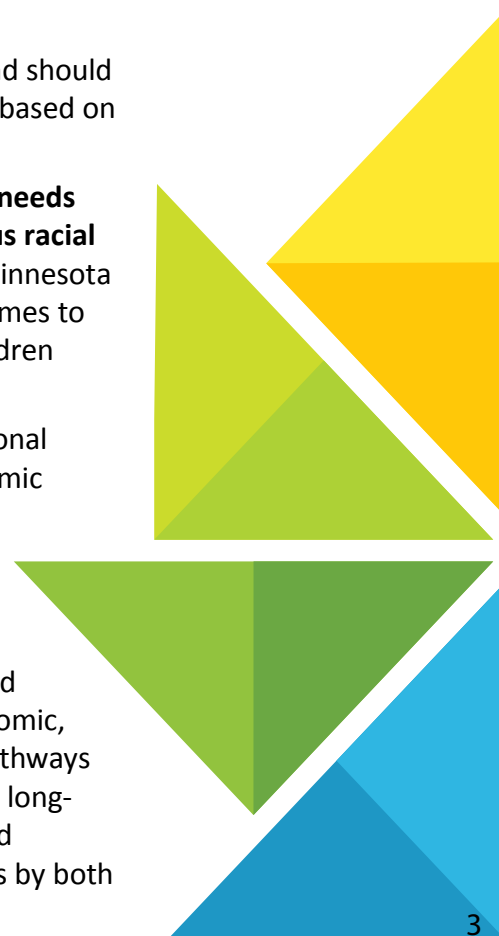
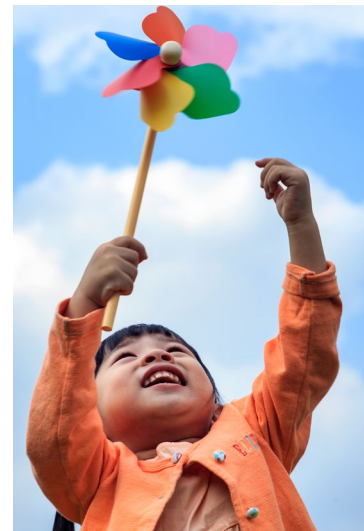
Contents

Executive Summary of Recommendations	3
SIDEBAR: Early Childhood definition	4
Background	5
Process	5
The Early Childhood Landscape in Minnesota	6
SIDEBAR: Mixed Delivery System	6
Recommendations for Four-Year-Old Preschool in Minnesota	7
Access	7
SIDEBAR: Universal And Targeted Universalism	8
Quality	8
Four-Year-Old Preschool Settings/Locations	9
Workforce	10
SIDEBAR: Unconscious Bias	10
Credentials for Teachers	11
Infrastructure And Local Collaborative Hubs	13
Appendix: Mixed Delivery Models and More	15
What is a mixed delivery system? ²⁶	15
What are the benefits of a mixed delivery system?	15
What kinds of partnership models are there for Mixed Delivery Systems?	15
What contributes to the success of a mixed delivery system?	16
Do we have any successful models in Minnesota?	16
What does it look like for children?	17
What does it look like for teachers and other staff?	17
What does it look like for parents?	17
What does it look like for the community?	18
Are there other examples in Minnesota?	18
Are there other states that have a mixed delivery system?	19
Tell me more about this local collaborative hub— what exactly is it?	19
Who is in charge of this local collaborative hub?	20
Conclusion	20
Design Team Members	21
(Endnotes)	22

Executive Summary of Recommendations

The Pre-K to 3 Design Team, a group of early childhood stakeholders convened by the West Central Initiative, with support from the McKnight Foundation, is recommending an approach for providing broad access to high-quality, preschool programming for four year olds in a mixed delivery context. The following recommendations grew out of an intensive discernment process including extensive research, shared learning, work with local and national experts and tapping into networks of parents and providers:

- **Preschool access for all four year olds should be phased in across Minnesota** with initial eligibility extended to children from low-income families and those with additional risk factors. Ultimately, statewide voluntary preschool should be available to all four year olds in Minnesota whose families choose to use it.
- **A mixed delivery system best supports family choice.** These programs can be located in any public, charter or private school; licensed child care center; licensed family child care or Head Start program that meets agreed upon quality criteria.
- **Quality is more important than program type.** Programs with a Three- or Four-Star Parent Aware rating represent the minimum quality benchmarks to which programs should be held. The Design Team identified key quality criteria for early childhood programs, such as culturally and linguistically relevant curricula and practice, assessment, and instruction for early childhood programs. Some of these criteria are embedded in Parent Aware and some push beyond Parent Aware's current standards and measures of quality. (Readers will find these criteria articulated on page 8 of the full report.)
- **Parents are their children's first and most important teachers** and should be given choice as to where to send their four-year-old children – based on family needs and preferences.
- **The early childhood system, from prenatal through third grade, needs leadership that will aggressively address the issue of unconscious racial bias which contributes to racial disparities.** We recognize that Minnesota has some of the widest racial disparities in the country when it comes to academic achievement and these disparities start well before children enter kindergarten.
- The early childhood **field should strive towards equity** in educational outcomes for all children regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, home language, geography or culture.
- **Minnesota should support early childhood educators in accessing pathways to higher education and credentials,** including a content-specific BA degree, but should not require a BA at this time. These opportunities should be widely available and accessible to providers from diverse linguistic, cultural, socioeconomic, geographic and racial backgrounds. The development of these pathways will take time and resources and should be done in concert with a long-term plan for transforming the workforce. Current early childhood providers need to be supported in obtaining additional credentials by both traditional means and alternate pathways.





EARLY CHILDHOOD

As used throughout this report, and generally in the field, early childhood refers to the period from prenatal through eight years old, or third grade. The research about early childhood has exploded in recent years and we know now how incredibly important this phase of development is for children. During these eight-plus years, children's brains undertake an astonishing amount of sophisticated growth and development. It is the period of time in which a child builds cognitive skills as well as social-emotional, motor, executive functioning and character skills. What happens in these first eight-plus years is crucial to success in school and, indeed, success in life.

- **Transforming the early childhood workforce**, with the requisite funding, higher education opportunities, supports and pathways will not happen overnight and **likely requires at least a decade of sustained attention and investment**.
- Efforts to strengthen the capacity and quality of the workforce should go hand in hand with efforts to **increase the number of bicultural and bilingual early childhood teachers**.
- **Local communities need to design the solutions that will work best for their unique needs**. Local stakeholders that reflect the breadth of Pre-K to 3 services as well as parents and community leaders should be part of the local collaborative process.
- **The State should provide clear guidance around Pre-K quality program standards** and support localities in ensuring that programs meet those benchmarks.
- **There should be investment in the entire early childhood continuum**, from prenatal to third grade. Home visiting and early learning scholarships should be available to children prenatal to age 3 from low income families and/or with additional risk factors.
- Early childhood programs need to be **aligned with high-quality early elementary programs** so that early learning gains are sustained and strengthened through third grade and beyond.

Background

There is now general consensus in this country on the critical importance of quality early childhood experiences for all children and its positive impact over the lifetime of a child. There is also growing consensus on the importance of a high-quality, aligned continuum of learning from birth to grade three. Convened by the West Central Initiative, with support from the McKnight Foundation, a group of early childhood stakeholders has been meeting for almost two years to discuss ways to improve outcomes for Minnesota's children by better aligning the State's early childhood and early elementary systems. This group dubbed itself the Pre-K to 3 Design Team.

Following the 2015 legislative debates over the best means for increasing access to early childhood education, and especially for serving four year olds, the Design Team turned its attention in 2015 to determining how Minnesota might provide broad access to high-quality, preschool programming for four year olds in a mixed delivery context. This report contains the Design Team's recommendations for doing so.

Process

The Design Team began meeting in early 2014 and added professional facilitation and project management in the summer of 2014. The first year was spent building a shared understanding of Pre-K to 3 by working through a framework for planning, implementing and evaluating Pre-K to third grade approaches. The framework was developed by Dr. Kristie Kauerz of the University of Washington and Julia Coffman from the Center for Evaluation Innovation.¹ This Pre-K to 3 continuum has an expectation of continuous, connected and aligned learning that engages students and families from preschool to third grade and seeks to improve academic outcomes and long term success while reducing achievement gaps. The Design Team reviewed multiple research articles, advocacy pieces and federal guidance, including the proposed Strong Start² bill and Preschool Expansion grants³. The McKnight Foundation commissioned New America, a national think-tank known for its reporting and policy analysis on early education issues, to review Minnesota's existing Pre-K to 3 elements and make recommendations for improvement.⁴ Design Team members had the opportunity to review the report, hear New America's presentation and engage with the researchers.

Following the 2015 legislative session, staff at the Minnesota Department of Education approached the Design Team and asked it to provide specific input and insight into how Minnesota could develop a statewide, voluntary preschool system for four year olds that includes mixed delivery options for families and communities. To undertake this effort, the Design Team first ensured that it included stakeholders from diverse racial, geographic, and cultural communities and with expertise in multiple approaches to Pre-K provision, from school-based to Head Start to private center and family based settings. Once we knew we had a diverse mix of individual perspectives at the table, we embarked on a shared learning agenda, consulting a number of books and research articles about preschool⁵, local and national experts, the Minnesota Department of Education's Early Learning Listening Sessions report⁶ and tapped into our own networks of parents and providers. Two of the Design Team members were also able to travel to Sweden in November of 2015 with





MIXED DELIVERY SYSTEM

The term “mixed delivery system” means a system –programs, providers and settings (such as Head Start, licensed family and center-based child care programs, public schools and community-based organizations) that is supported with a combination of public funds and private funds.

the Minnesota Council of Foundation’s delegation⁷ to learn more about Sweden’s success with early childhood programs and report back to the Design Team. To begin, we acknowledge the great strides Minnesota has made in fostering a robust early childhood ecosystem.

The Early Childhood Landscape in Minnesota

Minnesota has been steadily making significant progress on improving early childhood and early elementary experiences. The federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, awarded in 2012, has sparked a variety of significant improvements including:

- Expanded Minnesota’s tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, Parent Aware, statewide.
- Offered professional development including over 100 local community teams trained as Pre-K to 3 teams through MDE’s Pre-K to 3rd Grade Leadership Institute as well as new Pre-K to 3 training for elementary principals.
- Launched a statewide Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System.
- Revised Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs) for birth through age five. These indicators of progress provide uniform and comprehensive learning goals to help teachers as well as parents know what their children should be learning and doing in order to be ready for kindergarten.
- Revised Minnesota’s Core Competencies for early childhood professionals into the new Knowledge and Competencies Framework for early childhood professionals. This framework sets forth what early childhood professionals should know and be able to do in order to work effectively with young children and their families.
- Designed the Kindergarten Entry Profile which includes several valid and reliable assessments to measure kindergarten readiness.
- Conducted multiple regional listening sessions and a statewide survey to better understand the early learning needs of communities.
- Increased professional development and training, strengthened Minnesota’s career lattice, provided grants and scholarships to offset teachers’ costs and launched *Develop*, a virtual one-stop-shop for quality improvement and access to professional development opportunities.

Additionally, Minnesota adopted full-day kindergarten in 2013, which increased instructional opportunities for five year olds. The World’s Best Workforce and Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS) legislation also demonstrate the state’s commitment to ensuring kindergarten readiness, third-grade reading proficiency, and rigorous supports for young language learners. In the 2015 legislative session, the legislature committed significant new funds to expand Early Learning Scholarships, Early Head Start, Head Start, School Readiness and Child Care Assistance. In addition, the first state appropriation for Parent Aware was passed. These developments and investments are a strong foundation upon which to build. However, despite these investments, too many parents across the state struggle to find affordable high-quality care. Minnesota’s investment in education for four year olds lags behind many other states. This means that too many Minnesota children are entering kindergarten without the

skills and supports they need to be successful in school and beyond. We know that we can do better.

Recommendations for Four-Year-Old Preschool in Minnesota

There is no question that if we want to reduce achievement gaps, create engaged citizens and produce a strong workforce to power Minnesota’s economy, we should continue to invest in quality early childhood supports. However, putting resources into making sure all four year olds are in preschool is not, on its own, enough. The Design Team feels strongly that there should be an investment in the entire Pre-K to grade 3 continuum, from prenatal through age eight.

Whatever approach is adopted for four year olds needs to include sufficient support for children and their families from birth to age three. The best results will accrue if children are adequately supported and nurtured during their first three years of life and then enter preschool ready for success.

The benefits of a statewide and voluntary four-year-old early childhood preschool system will be most likely realized if these preschool programs are aligned with high-quality early elementary programming. When there is clear alignment between two high quality systems then the early learning gains can be sustained and strengthened through third grade and beyond. Currently, educational outcomes are not consistent for all students. Children of color experience large and unacceptable disparities in opportunities and outcomes. Every element of the early childhood system, including infant and toddler, preschool and early elementary, needs to understand and address racial bias.

We recognize that a quality infrastructure, including a vibrant early childhood workforce, appropriate facilities, and transportation supports, should be in place before full-scale implementation of voluntary four-year old preschool can take place in any setting. This infrastructure should include accountability for quality and investment in the human capital required to monitor and maintain this infrastructure.⁹ This infrastructure will take time, likely a decade, to build and be fully in place. That being said, the Design Team feels that we can continue building parts of this system now – Minnesota’s children can’t wait.

After almost two years of research, presentations and careful deliberation, the Pre-K to 3 Design Team has the following recommendations for a statewide, voluntary, mixed delivery system for four year olds.

ACCESS

Minnesota should provide statewide and voluntary preschool for all four year olds within a mixed delivery system that includes high-quality school-based, private and nonprofit programs. These programs can be located in any public, charter or private school; licensed child care center; licensed family child care or Head Start that meets agreed upon quality criteria.

Following the philosophy of targeted universalism, voluntary preschool should be phased in across Minnesota with initial eligibility extended to families living at 185 percent or below the federal poverty level.¹⁰ Local communities should establish





UNIVERSAL AND TARGETED UNIVERSALISM

Universal preschool means that public funds are used to ensure that preschool is available to all children whose families choose to use it. Universal preschool exists in some other states as well as many other countries and Minnesota lags behind.

Targeted Universalism rejects the “one size fits all” approach and instead advises the use of targeted strategies to reach universal goals. Targeted universalism is inclusive of the needs of both the well-off as well as the less well-off, but pays particular attention to the needs of the less well-off. Using a targeted universalism approach deepens the ability to attend to the glaring racial disparities in Minnesota’s educational outcomes. This concept of “targeted universalism” has been developed and promoted by civil rights lawyer John Powell, who founded and ran the Institute on Race and Poverty at the University of Minnesota Law School.⁸

additional criteria for initial eligibility including, but not limited to, housing instability, language learner status, military service, foster care, teen parent, incarcerated parent or special education needs.

Minnesota should also maintain and expand early learning scholarships and home visiting support for children from prenatal to age 3 living at 185 percent or below of the poverty level or with associated risk factors.

Ultimately, preschool should be available to all 4 year olds in Minnesota whose families choose to participate. All children, regardless of family income, need support. Research tells us the children from the lowest income families gain the most from high-quality early childhood programs, which is why these children should be prioritized in initial preschool investments. But research also tells us children from middle class families experience important gains that set them on the trajectory for academic success.¹¹ Minnesota’s recently launched Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System (ECLDS) will soon be able to tell us how many of Minnesota’s four year olds participating in publicly-funded access programs, such as the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and scholarships, are receiving high-quality early education. The Kindergarten Entry Profile (KEP) will tell us about the readiness skills of children. The ECLDS is growing, and until all sources are integrated this year, we can rely on the national figures, which show that only 25% of four year olds are in high-quality care.¹² That means that up to a full three-quarters of Minnesota’s four year olds are likely not attending programs that put them on track for school success.

Universality is consistent with many important policy objectives including equality in access, efficiency and socioeconomic diversity. Equity objectives mean that some children, especially those most disadvantaged, will need more support. Therefore, even as preschool investments grow to include all children, we recommend the state commit to a targeted universalism approach in which the state provides tiered resources that include baseline support for all families and more intensive supports to children with specific risk factors.

QUALITY

Minnesota’s system to gauge early childhood quality is embedded within the Parent Aware Quality Rating and Improvement System.¹³ Three-and Four-Star Parent Aware ratings represent the minimum quality benchmarks to which eligible programs should be held in a mixed delivery, voluntary preschool system. Other key quality criteria identified by the Design Team - some of which are embedded in Parent Aware, and some which push beyond Parent Aware’s current standards and measures of quality, include:

- Highly qualified staff—early childhood educators should be provided meaningful, affordable, and accessible opportunities to increase their education and credentials, up to and including receiving a content-specific BA degree. While concerns for racial and cultural equity, as well as limited research tying credentials to quality, prevent us from recommending a BA requirement at this time, we believe that Minnesota’s children will be best served if early childhood educators, especially lead-teachers, receive continued education and support, as well as opportunities for increased compensation

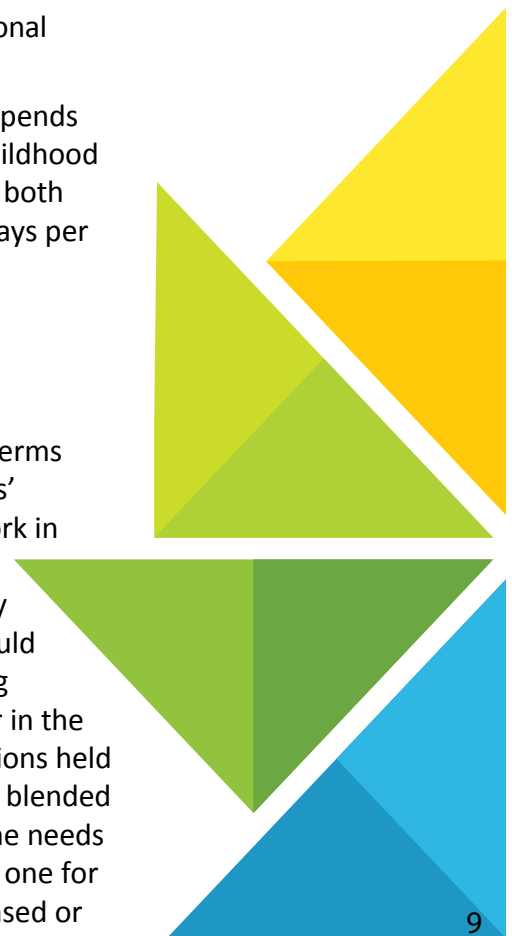
- Ongoing and relationship-based professional development for staff
- Developmentally appropriate classroom environment and instructional activities
- Attention to children’s social-emotional development
- Implementation of evidence-based curriculum that aligns to standards and includes appropriate assessments
- Cultural and linguistic competence among staff and cultural and linguistic relevance within selected curricula, learning environment, pedagogy, etc.
- Evidence-based approaches to family engagement including consistent and strong support for parents as their child’s first teachers
- Access to comprehensive services including transportation and referrals to mental health and other family support services
- Commitment to maintaining health and safety standards along with play, physical activity and healthy nutrition
- Appropriate support and inclusion of students with special needs and dual language learners
- Two-way engagement with nearby early elementary programs to promote pre-K to grade three alignment
- Additional support and resources for early childhood providers from communities of color so they can earn Parent Aware three- or four-star ratings, such as developing 12 month learning communities¹⁴
- Professional Development providers (such as the Department of Human Services or Child Care Resource and Referral) should identify and and/ or develop cultural competency trainings (i.e. Indian Child Welfare Act trainings) that are approved by the Minnesota Center for Professional Development and in Develop¹⁵



An additional indicator of quality is the amount of time that the student spends in early childhood settings. Research shows that more time in an early childhood environment, measured by a full-day versus a half-day schedule, benefits both children and families. Time issues encompass the length of the day, the days per week as well the weeks per year.¹⁶

FOUR-YEAR-OLD PRESCHOOL SETTINGS/LOCATIONS

The quality of the program is more important than the type of setting or particular location. Individual communities in Minnesota differ vastly in terms of the kind of early childhood programs available, space issues, employers’ needs, transportation and more. What works in McGregor might not work in Minneapolis and vice versa. Local communities should be given the freedom to design a system of early care and education that is specifically created to best meet their unique needs. More importantly, families should be allowed to exercise choice and determine the most appropriate setting for their children. The importance of choice came through loud and clear in the Minnesota Departments of Education and Human Services Listening Sessions held this winter.¹⁷ A mixed delivery approach allows for funding sources to be blended together to create more full-day and full-year programs that best meet the needs of children and families. A mixed delivery approach is therefore the right one for the state to fund and pursue. Within this mixed delivery system, any licensed or





UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Also referred to as implicit bias, unconscious bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that people have, but that they are not necessarily aware that they have. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known or explicit bias. Unconscious bias causes people to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, class and appearance. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime and are influenced by exposure to direct and indirect messages. Unconscious bias does not always align with declared beliefs. Unconscious bias is malleable and can be gradually unlearned. Research has documented unconscious bias in police officers, physicians, employers making hiring decisions as well as teachers.

licensed-exempt care setting that meets quality benchmarks (see above) should be eligible to provide preschool and receive state education funding, including four-year-old preschool dollars.

WORKFORCE

Teacher effectiveness is the most important element of any education program. The Race to the Top federal funds have allowed Minnesota to strengthen the quality of early childhood teachers through the Knowledge and Competency Frameworks, increased professional development, strengthened career lattice and Develop, the online tool for early childhood professionals. The Design Team fully understands and supports continuous and ongoing efforts to support teachers and enhance teacher quality and effectiveness. Programs should support ongoing and relationship-based professional development for all staff.

Efforts to strengthen the quality of the workforce should go hand in hand with efforts to diversify the workforce. Minnesota's children will benefit from early educational professionals who represent the diverse languages and cultures of the state. Bicultural and bilingual educators may need additional financial and other supports to remove barriers to earn the quality credentials. "A teaching force that represents the nation's racial, ethnic, and linguistic cultures and effectively incorporates this background and knowledge to enhance students' academic achievement is advantageous to the academic performance of students of all backgrounds, and for students of color specifically."¹⁸

The MDE/DHS Listening Sessions Report found that the number-one priority for improving early childhood experiences was educators who are highly qualified and compensated fairly.¹⁹ Research is clear, the strongest gains for children across numerous studies have been achieved where teachers are well-educated and are compensated at parity with public school teachers.²⁰ Compensation that aligns with education, job responsibilities and wages of comparable working groups leads to better outcomes for children. To support ongoing education for early childhood educators, loan forgiveness, expansion of T.E.A.C.H. and R.E.T.A.I.N. funds, tax credits and other financial support should be included in the overall approach.

The workforce issues facing early childhood are impactful, nuanced and complex. These issues include low teacher wages, wide variability in higher education with regard to required coursework, college schedules that are not possible for those who are providing child care during the day, a lack of student teaching opportunities and coherent, accessible pathways for degrees, and the need for scholarships and incentives for higher education to offset low wages. Minnesota's specific workforce issues include an aging and non-diverse workforce, a shortage of early childhood special education teachers as well as competition for licensed teachers because of the recently implemented statewide, all-day kindergarten. Our recommendation is that the state commit to transforming the early childhood workforce. This workforce transformation should address changes from institutes of higher education including ensuring that high-quality interdisciplinary education and training is available statewide; more opportunities for supervised student teaching; strengthening ongoing professional development; better evaluation of early childhood practitioners; and improved education of early elementary teachers and principals.²¹ While this transition is underway, all early childhood educators, including early childhood and early elementary teachers, should

participate in ongoing and jointly-offered relationship-based professional development. Realizing this vision also requires providing state agencies and stakeholders with the time and resources to develop effective tools that measure an individual's progress against Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework.

CREDENTIALS FOR TEACHERS

The Design Team had many in-depth conversations about what qualifies someone to teach pre-K and the criteria used to make that decision. A requirement for a BA, a BA in early childhood or early development, demonstrated proficiency in Minnesota's Knowledge and Competencies Framework and/or early childhood licensure were all considered as potential qualifications. While there are many elements of childcare quality, research supports that the nature of the interactions between the teacher and the child are of critical importance. While almost all states require early elementary teachers to have at least a BA degree, very few states have a comparable requirement for Pre-K teachers.

The Design Team appreciates that Minnesota must continue to develop and professionalize the early childhood workforce and that having teachers who have content-specific degrees may be inherently desirable for the children served, for the early childhood system, and (if BAs come with increased compensation) for the educators themselves. However, concerns about the shifting political landscape as well as deep concerns about the ways in which a BA requirement could increase the racial, linguistic, cultural, geographic and socioeconomic homogeneity of the early childhood workforce – and limited evidence that current educator preparation programs result in more effective educators – lead us against recommending a BA requirement at this time. Instead, the Design Team advocates the development of educational pathways that will provide the opportunity to earn increased credentials and professionalize the field without placing the burden of a costly mandate on educators. While we believe that increasing the number of early childhood educators with content specific degrees would professionalize the early childhood workforce, justify compensation increases, and likely increase the overall quality of early childhood education in Minnesota, the Design Team recognizes that we must first transform our systems of education and support for educators before recommending a requirement for credentials that could unduly impact low-income providers, greater Minnesota providers, immigrant providers and providers of color. We further recognize that reducing the diversity of the early childhood workforce would place a burden on families who want their children to experience high-quality, culturally relevant early childhood education.

Therefore, the Design Team advocates that, rather than institute a BA requirement at this time, Minnesota develop pathways to increased credentials that include and consider:

- *Time for the transition.* Minnesota may need as long as ten years to fully prepare for a system in which most or all early childhood educators have degrees, due to the many interconnected workforce issues.
- *Systemic issues.* Structural racism exists. We need to address explicit and implicit bias and strive to be culturally specific and culturally relevant so we





can prepare white teachers to work with students from communities of color as well as connect and support teachers of color. The system should be built out in such a way as to allow for open dialogue about issues of racism and how it impedes the progress of all students.

- *Support to retain and grow current workforce, particularly providers of color.* It will be important to consider that we do not want to add any requirements that will adversely impact the number of providers of color. In Minnesota, for many children of color the only time they have a teacher that looks like them is in preschool. This can have tremendous impact on the self-esteem and cultural awareness for children of color, American Indian children and English Language Learners. Creating pathways toward degrees must be done in a way that provides support for providers of color to continue being providers while acquiring a degree. These supports might include access-based support such as on-line classes or classes at non-traditional hours and location, financial support, skill-based support such as academic advising and counseling, computer support and training and English language support for ELL providers. In addition, providing learning communities for providers of color and English Language Learners can allow for providers to encourage and learn from each other as they are obtaining their degrees.



- *Costs of higher education.* College costs are prohibitively high for most of those in the early childhood workforce. Aggressive financial supports (grants not loans) should be in place.
- *Access.* Some of the early childhood education programs in greater Minnesota have closed. Early childhood providers across the state need either real or virtual access to institutes of higher education. Early childhood providers also need access to classes in the evenings or on weekends so that they can continue to support themselves as childcare providers while going to school.
- *Practical realities.* Many of our immigrant community providers have never been part of the United States' public education system. They may lack documentation of a high school degree from their country of origin or may never have learned college-level English. Hmong and Somali elders who are currently providing critical and important culturally specific care are an example of the kind of providers for whom a college degree requirement may not be realistic. Lead teachers who demonstrate proficiency across the Knowledge and Competencies Framework may be deemed qualified and exempted from any future credentialing requirements. Educators should be supported in obtaining BAs and/or early childhood expertise by both traditional means and alternative pathways.

The workforce and credentialing issues for early childhood are complex and interdependent. Design Team members are firmly in agreement that the broader scope of early childhood workforce issues in Minnesota need both attention and resources.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND LOCAL COLLABORATIVE HUBS

Ensuring student success requires investing in the entire Pre-K to 3 continuum. Preschool policies should require that preschool and early elementary programs build strong connections around family engagement and promote continuity in enrollment, curriculum, instruction, assessment and professional development. Whatever systems are developed for four year olds should consider the design implications on services for infants and toddlers.

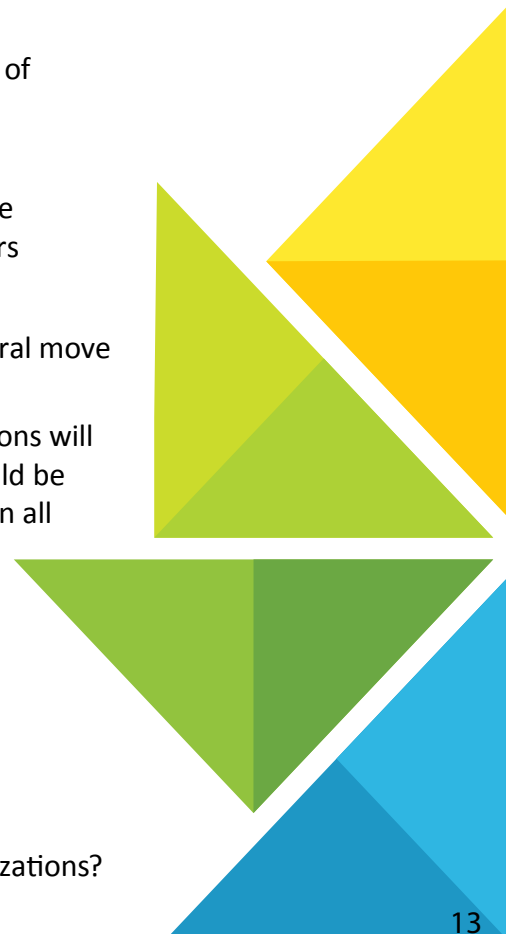
There are currently multiple organizations operating in Minnesota's pre-K sphere. In order to create pre-K mixed-delivery systems that are aligned, organized and efficient, it is necessary for these organizations to come together in some kind of structured fashion. While there are likely a variety of ways in which this could happen, we primarily envision a local collaborative hub or early learning council. The name is not the important part but rather the communication, sharing of resources and problem solving is what distinguishes the hub from the status quo.

This hub is important primarily because better outcomes for children can be achieved by combining expertise, planning and resources to create high quality systems. Under collective impact principles, the community can align around common goals advanced by the hub, identify root causes and propose solutions that could not be done by any one organization acting alone. Additional advantages of a hub/collaborative approach include:

- Allowing the participation of a mix of stakeholders who have an interest in the outcome as well as involvement of the broader community including the business sector, faith based organizations, civic leaders, philanthropy, local government, higher education, public K – 12 education, health providers etc.
- Sharing of resources such as in-kind services, training, co-location of services/staff, facilities, supplies, transportation, social services
- Ensuring parent voice and participation
- Ensuring participation by those who are frequently not at the table including communities of color and community child care providers
- Joint advocacy
- An alignment of early childhood with early elementary and a natural move toward a Pre-K to 3 approach

Building connections and finding common ground with diverse organizations will take time. Structured dialog could speed this change process. Hubs should be built into existing infrastructure. There will need to be trust built between all stakeholders and the establishment of shared mission, vision and goals. Unanswered questions include:

- How many local hubs should there be?
- What is the process for starting a hub?
- What happens if no one comes to the table?
- What happens if people cannot agree?
- Who makes it happen? Paid staff? Staff from participating organizations?



- What level of support will MDE/DHS provide? Funding, tool-kits, templates, manuals, training?
- What strategies are required to bring diverse organizations together for discussion?

In order to ensure effective Pre-K to 3 systems are designed and implemented the following practices and conditions should be accounted for:

- The collaborative hub should convene a group of stakeholders that will define local goals which will strengthen their pre-K-3 continuum of services. The state should fund the appropriate professional development and supports necessary for the collaborative hub to achieve their defined goals.
- Stakeholders should reflect the breadth of Pre-K to 3 settings and services, as well as the socioeconomic and racial diversity of the communities being served by the system and they will have authentic influence over the system.
- The collaborative hub should include parent and community voices as key critical stakeholder groups. The hub should be structured to support greater diversity of voices and perspectives.
- Individuals within the systems will have a clear understanding and agree that they are able to promote the goals of the hub. Building and continuously improving various elements of the Pre-K to 3 systems should require members of the collaborative hub to commit to these goals.
- The collaborative hub should promote providers that achieve high-quality standards of service as defined by the state.
- The collaborative hub should promote the state defined preschool student standards, Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIP), and support efforts to align provider assessment practices.
- The local collaborative hub should ensure that the members of their hub have a clear understanding of the challenges and unique needs of their Pre-K to 3 systems in order to create effective solutions.
- The local hub should openly discuss and address racial disparity issues within the Pre-K to 3 systems.
- The collaborative hub should consider solutions to local barriers. Topics could include but are not limited to, workforce development, cultural responsiveness, transportation supports, facilities and data infrastructure.
- Local teams should be trained through MDE's Pre-K to 3rd Grade Leadership Institute and also receive implicit/unconscious bias training.

Other states have experienced success in combining local jurisdictions into regional Pre-K to 3 systems.²⁵ Communities, especially those located in greater Minnesota, should be encouraged to explore regional Pre-K to 3 systems that span city and/or county boundaries. The state should provide infrastructure and resources that will ensure organization and leadership development, financial and quality assurance monitoring, training and technical assistance, and state-wide data-collection and evaluation.

Appendix: Mixed Delivery Models and More

*What is a mixed delivery system?*²⁶

The term “mixed delivery system” means a system –programs, providers and settings (such as Head Start, licensed family and center-based child care programs, public schools and community-based organizations) that is supported with a combination of public funds and private funds. By using a mixed delivery system, communities can increase the number of programs as well as the diversity of programs currently serving children while still maintaining evidence-based standards for effective high-quality programs. A mixed delivery system preserves the important element of parental choice and convenience for families.

What are the benefits of a mixed delivery system?

- Sharing of resources (common curriculum & assessments, instructional materials)
- Fewer transitions for children
- Fiscal benefits
- Improved communication among partners
- Better coordinated services
- Improved program quality
- Coordinated professional development
- Improved program accountability
- Family centered services
- Shared service model
- Staff access to professional development supports

What kinds of partnership models are there for Mixed Delivery Systems?

There is not a “one size fits all” model. School districts have worked out four general kinds of partnerships:

1. The stacked or flip flop model
2. Concurrent model
3. Wraparound model
4. Subcontracting model

In the **stacked or flip flop model**, two programs are offered simultaneously in order to piece together a full day of early care and education. For example, a student might spend the morning with a Head Start teacher and the afternoon with a School Readiness public school teacher.

In the **concurrent model**, more than one service is offered simultaneously. In the concurrent model, two teachers from different programs co-teach the same group of children.





In the **wraparound model**, there are one or more programs working together to provide before and or after school services. This is usually a partnership between a child care or Head Start center and a public school.

Finally, the **subcontracting model** involves one program subcontracting to provide services to children. As an example, a public school district contracts with a private child care center for services.

What contributes to the success of a mixed delivery system?

Studies²⁷ reported that the following factors helped facilitate success:

- Committed leadership
- Strong relationships and trust among program administrators
- Common vision and goals
- Joint training sessions for staff
- A plan for ongoing communication
- Formal partnership agreements
- Strong relationships and trust among teaching and service delivery staff
- Assigning specific staff to oversee the partnership
- A structured planning process
- A funding plan
- Maintaining stability among partners
- A process for exploring alignment issues related to regulations, standards, and policies
- Public relations and marketing

Do we have any successful models in Minnesota?

Invest Early, located in Grand Rapids, Minnesota is a great example of a partnership system that is both concurrent and wraparound. Invest Early is a partnership of health and human services agencies serving low- to moderate-income families in Itasca county through high quality early childhood education and other family support programs.

During the school year, preschool classrooms operate from 8:30 to 4:00 pm four days per week. The preschool classrooms are co-taught by two qualified teachers. One teacher works 27 hours per week and is primarily with the children. The other teacher works 40 hours a week and handles the administrative work as well as teaching the children. Wrap-around care is available from 6:00 am to 6:00 Monday through Friday.

During the summer, there are three full days of preschool class with extended care before and after and on the other two days. Head Start, School Readiness, Early Learning Scholarships and private philanthropic funds are blended together to offer these full day opportunities for children and their working parents.

There are 10 Invest Early locations in Itasca County governed by a partnership between KOOTASCA Head Start, all four school districts in Itasca County, Itasca County Public Health and Human Services and Itasca Community College.

What does it look like for children?

The children have consistency in adult caregivers over the course of the year so that they can develop close relationships with them. They are in the same building during the day so they don't have to get transported someplace else in the middle of the day. They have a healthy mix of learning and play time with lots of hands-on activities. The program standards are those used by Head Start so the quality is high and the ratio of children to adults is low. Each child has an individualized learning plan. Children are more likely to be on track developmentally and these 7

What does it look like for teachers and other staff?

The preschool class is co-taught by the two lead teachers. They share the work in the classroom with the teacher who has the more paid hours handling the majority of the paperwork and administrative responsibilities. Evidence-based curricula are used to support both literacy and social-emotional growth. Assessments are done regularly and the data is analyzed monthly in staff meetings so that instruction can be personalized and intervention can happen as soon as possible. Additional professional staff, including Early Childhood Special Education, Children's Mental Health, Family Support and Parent Education, meet with teachers monthly to discuss how to best support children and their families. This keeps children on track for academic success as well as promotes professional support and ongoing learning. There is ongoing joint professional development to support teachers' knowledge and skills. Career ladders are available to support staff in getting an Early Childhood teacher license. Wraparound care is available to meet families' needs so that teachers can focus on teaching.



Time	Coverage	Funding Source
Before School	Transportation	Invest Early and School District
6:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. Monday-Thursday	Child Care Staff	Invest Early and sliding fee
8:30 a.m. to 4:00 a.m. Monday-Thursday	1. Lead Teacher I (27 hours a week) 2. Lead Teacher II (40 hours a week) 3. Educational Support Teacher	1. Invest Early, Pathways II and State School Readiness 2. Head Start 3. Invest Early and Pathways II
4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Friday	Child Care Staff	Invest Early and sliding fee
6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Friday	Child Care Staff	Invest Early and sliding fee
After School	Transportation	Invest Early and School District

What does it look like for parents?

Families fill out one application and don't need to worry about which funding source will cover their child. Coverage is available five days a week from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm so that parents can work full time and/or go to school. Home visiting from a Family Support staff is offered so parents can develop stronger relationships, ask questions and learn more about their child and child development in general in the comfort of their own home. If there are developmental or other issues with their child, the school works to understand those issues and provide support to the parents. The school sends home School Connection backpacks to partner with parents to support their children's learning. Public Health and Adult Basic Education are available for parents. Parents feel like partners in their child's learning and gain confidence to advocate for their child's needs.





What does it look like for the community?

Parents are able to work and not worry about their children. Employers have workers who can focus on their jobs. Community members have the opportunity to participate in the Community Partners Board that meets quarterly. The community understands that all of the various government entities (Public Health, Head Start, school districts, community college) and local foundations are collaborating and working together. Tax dollars are being well spent and there are cost savings associated with all the prevention and screening work. Ultimately, the community has children who are more likely to experience school success, graduate from high school and be ready for college or career and contribution back to the community.

Are there other examples in Minnesota?

Stakeholders in Winona have developed a really interesting mixed delivery collaboration through the BG3 (Birth to Grade 3) initiative. BG3 is community-based, as opposed to school-based, and includes faith-based, center-based and Head Start Pre-K programs; center-based early childhood, licensed home providers, FFNs, and ECFE; area public schools; local government and community-based health and human service providers; Winona State University; SE Technical College; parks, recreation centers, libraries, museums, the YMCA and local funders. The BG3 committee functions as a hub for early childhood education and care from prenatal to grade three across the entire community. An elementary school principal and a third grade teacher provide leadership and there are five committees chaired by a mix of school and early childhood community leaders. The committees work on identifying barriers, building support for families, alignment, fundraising and advocacy.

Resources are “braided” together to provide more comprehensive services for children and families: parent tuition, Head Start, Child Care Assistance Payments (CCAP), Early Learning Scholarships and grants are combined to offer 12-month programming for hundreds of children in elementary schools and at the University of Winona. Parents can choose from 15, 29 or 45-hours of care per week. The curriculum and assessment tools are aligned across all of the sites. An Early Childhood Development Support Specialist works with Head Start and child care centers as an early intervention consultant. An ECFE Parent Educator meets monthly with 18 licensed family child care providers.

Winona State University (WSU), as a provider of higher education and credentialing for students interested in early childhood education, is a key stakeholder in BG3. They operate the University’s Children’s Center as a hub of learning and service for both students and the community. They also offer professional development for students as well as existing early childhood professionals. WSU has also been developing innovative programs to address workforce shortages as well as create career pathways for paraprofessionals and teacher aides in the Rochester and Austin public schools who want to become licensed early childhood teachers. They believe that opportunities exist to increase the workforce with some targeted and customized programs that meet the local and regional needs of school districts.

Are there other states that have a mixed delivery system?

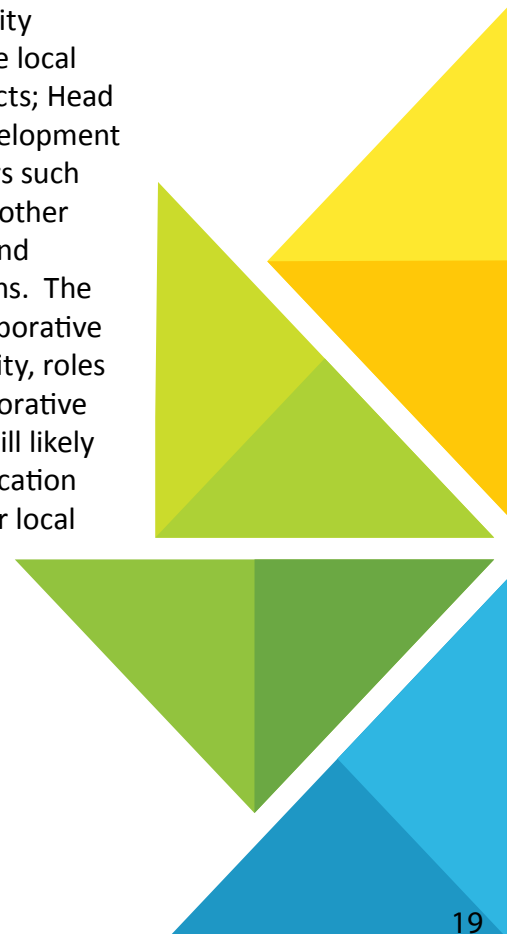
More than half of all states use a mixed-delivery model in which public preschools and schools, private preschools, child care centers, Head Start and community-based organizations serve children. Many of these states utilize a community partnership of some kind. There is no “one size fits all” mixed delivery or partnership model. A good resource is *Beyond the School Year: Pre-K Collaborations with Community-Based Partners* published by the Pew Center on the States.²⁸

West Virginia spent 10 years, beginning in 2002, to implement a universal, mixed delivery preschool program for all 4-years as well as 3-year olds with Individual Education Plans (IEPs). State law required that 50% of the classrooms were to be in community settings. As of the 2014 school year, 79% of the classrooms were in collaboration with community partners, including child care centers and Head Start programs, and 75% of the eligible children were participating. Each county is required to have a Collaborative Team comprised of community stakeholders that jointly develops a comprehensive delivery plan and budget. Funding is provided through the school aid funding formula as well as via “braiding and blending” with other early childhood funding streams e.g. Head Start, federal funds, and parent tuition. Districts enter into contracts with community providers. Quality is addressed through teacher qualifications, classroom size, staff-child ratios, early learning standards and more.²⁹



Tell me more about this local collaborative hub— what exactly is it?

A local collaborative hub is a group of community partners who agree to share decision-making and implementation of voluntary Pre-K in their community with each other. Each community can decide who needs to be part of the local collaborative hub but obvious partners would include public school districts; Head Start; center-based child care; licensed family providers; professional development providers, including higher education; health and human service providers such as county public health, human services, WIC, and Child Care Assistance; other community resources like public libraries and city parks and recreation; and funders like the United Way and the local Minnesota Initiative Foundations. The local collaborative hub needs leadership and infrastructure, like any collaborative partnership, and documents that clearly spell out leadership, accountability, roles and responsibilities. The local collaborative hub can be an existing collaborative or a new group that is created. The work of the local collaborative hub will likely get done by various sub-committees. The Minnesota Department of Education should provide technical assistance to communities as they establish their local collaborative hubs. Other states, including North Carolina, West Virginia and Oregon, have experienced positive results with these kinds of hubs.



Who is in charge of this local collaborative hub?

The partners are in charge of it. In a less intensive partnership, members cooperate with each other and share information but may have separate goals, resources and structures. In a coordinated partnership, there is some shared planning and division of roles as well as some shared resources, rewards and risks. In the most intensive partnerships, members truly collaborate. There is a new structure with a commitment to common goals. These “big P” partnerships are reciprocal in decision making, share resources as well as roles and responsibilities and result in more sustainable relationships and infrastructure. But again, the community partners decide where they want to fall on the partnership continuum.

Conclusion

We know there are many voices in the early childhood conversations. As a group made up of diverse stakeholders who have spent decades in the field, we are excited about making a difference for the youngest people in our state. We hope our recommendations are useful in the dialogue and we want to underscore they have been crafted in good faith through many hours of sometimes tense negotiations. We committed at the beginning, and believed we have held true, to always keeping our focus on the children.



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(Endnotes)

- 1 Available online at: http://depts.washington.edu/pthru3/PreK-3rd_Framework_Legal%20paper.pdf
- 2 The Strong Start for America's Children Act, S. 1697, initially introduced by Senator Tom Harkin, would expand access to high-quality preschool for four year olds from low and moderate income families through state –federal partnerships and reauthorizes appropriations for FY 2014 – FY 2023. <http://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Strong%20Start%20for%20America's%20Children%20Summary.pdf>
- 3 See: <http://www.ed.gov/blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/EXPANSION-grants-Executive-Summary-REVISED-05.14.14.pdf>
- 4 Available online at: <http://www.edcentral.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Building-Strong-Readers-Final-.pdf>
- 5 We used the book, *The Pre-K Debates: Current Controversies and Issues*, edited by Edward Zigler, Walter Gilliam and W. Steven Barnett, (2011) to provide structure to our monthly meetings.
- 6 The Minnesota Department of Education held 7 community listening sessions around the state in November of 2015. Over 600 people participated in these community gatherings. An additional 2,521 surveys were completed by parents, teachers, early childhood administrators and community partners (e.g. university, business, faith leaders). It should be noted that while surveys were translated into other languages, the vast majority of responses were from the English version of the survey. Responses therefore underrepresent families who do not speak English. The report is available online at: <http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/educ/documents/hiddencontent/bwrl/mdm0/~edisp/mde034769.pdf>
- 7 The Minnesota Council of Foundations organized a trip to Sweden to meet with Swedish experts and observe high-quality early childhood programs. The Minnesota delegation included early childhood funders, researchers, early childhood professionals, consultants, legislators and a representative from the Governor's office.
- 8 See John A. Powell, *Post-Racialization or Targeted Universalism*, 86 *Denv. U. L. Rev.* 785 (2008). Professor Powell (who does not use capitals) travelled to Sweden with the Minnesota delegation in 2014 to learn more about early childhood there and is currently at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law.
- 9 The recommendations from the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council on the early childhood workforce acknowledged that implementing full recommendations will take at least 10 years. See *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*, April 2015, available online at: <http://iom.nationalacademies.org/Reports/2015/Birth-To-Eight.aspx>.
- 10 This would reach approximately one-third of all Minnesota's four year olds or around 23,000 children. American Community Survey, 2014.
- 11 Targeted versus universal preschool access issues, along with extensive research, are well presented in the book that the entire Design Team read: *The Pre-K Debates: Current Controversies and Issues*, edited by Edward Zigler, Walter S. Gilliam and W. Steven Barnett (2011).
- 12 National Education Policy Center, *Review of Do We Already Have Universal Preschool?*, reviewed by W. Steven Barnett, November 2015. Available online at: <http://nepc.colorado.edu/thinktank/review-universal-preschool>.
- 13 For more information about Parent Aware see: <http://parentaware.org>
- 14 "Parent Aware Cultural Responsiveness Public Input Sessions Summary" by Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota, 2015.
- 15 "Parent Aware Cultural Responsiveness Public Input Sessions Summary" by Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota, 2015.
- 16 Reynolds, A., Richardson, B., Hayakawa, M., Lease, E., Warner-Richter, M., Englund, M., Ou S., and Sullivan, M., *Association of a Full-Day vs Part-Day Preschool Intervention with School Readiness, Attendance and Parent Involvement*, *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, November 2014.

17 Full report available online at: <http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/educ/documents/hiddencontent/bwrl/mdm0/~edisp/mde034769.pdf>.

18 Time for a Change: Diversity in Teaching Revisited, National Education Association Report, Dilworth, M. and Coleman, M., 2014. Available online at: [https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Time_for_a_Change_Diversity_in_Teaching_Revisited_\(web\).pdf](https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Time_for_a_Change_Diversity_in_Teaching_Revisited_(web).pdf)

19 See report, page 12, available online at: <http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/educ/documents/hiddencontent/bwrl/mdm0/~edisp/mde034769.pdf>.

20 “Minimum Requirements for Preschool Teacher Educational Qualifications”, Barnett, S., in The Pre-K Debates: Current Controversies and Issues, edited by Edward Zigler, Walter Gilliam and W. Steven Barnett, (2011).

21 See the recommendations from the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council on the early childhood workforce. Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation, April 2015, available online at: <http://iom.nationalacademies.org/Reports/2015/Birth-To-Eight.aspx>.

22 Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation, Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, Allen, B. and Kelly, B., editors, 2015.

23 Ibid., page 438 – 439.

24 A ten-year implementation timeline is consistent with the time period recommended in the workforce report from the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council of the National Academies mentioned above. See Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation, 2015.

25 See North Carolina Smart Start at: <http://www.smartstart.org> and Oregon Early Learning Hubs at: <https://oregonearlylearning.com>.

26 Good resources on mixed delivery systems can be found at: Illinois Action for Children: Early Childhood Action Partnerships Partner-Plan-Act, available at: www.actforchildren.org/ECAP; Private Partners in State PreK: Vital Partners, NAETC Young Children Journal, November 2011; State and Local Examples of Early Childhood Education Mixed Delivery Implementation Laws, Plans, and Programs, Midwest Comprehensive Center, available at: <http://midwest-cc.org/> and

Early Care and Education Partnerships: A Review of Literature, available at:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/early_care_and_education_partnerships_a_review_of_the_literature.pdf.

27 Ibid.

28 Beyond the School Yard: Pre-K Collaborations with Community-Based Partners, Albert Wat and Chrisanne Gayl, The Pew Center for the States, 2009. Available online at: http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2009/beyondtheschoolyardpdf.pdf. Readers may also be interested in Community Level Challenges in Implementing A Mixed Delivery PreKindergarten System: A Brief Review of Research and Field Experience, Samuel Stephens, Center for Children’s Initiatives, 2014 and available online at: <http://www.centerforchildrensinitiatives.org/images/2014/FINAL%20SAM%20PAPER%208-7-14.pdf>.

29 West Virginia earned a 10 out of 10 on the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) in 2015. See State Preschool Yearbook 2015 available online at: <http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/2015%20Yearbook.pdf>.



