

Pathways to Quality

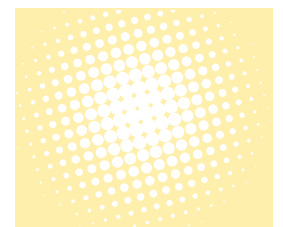
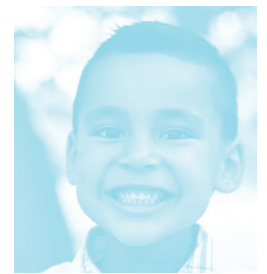
FINAL REPORT



Prepared by:

JORDAN BAKER, LAURIE DAVIS, DIANNE HAULCY, CISA KELLER,
JONATHAN MAY, AMANUEL MEDHANIE, AND BARBARA YATES

JULY 2019



Executive Summary

In 2015, Think Small and Generation Next received a grant from the Bush Foundation to develop and implement the Pathways to Quality (P2Q) program. P2Q, which provides research-based interventions and supports to early care and education (ECE) programs, has made significant progress toward its goals. In its second year of implementation (year 3 of the grant), P2Q achieved the following outcomes:

- The percentage of licensed family child care (LFCC) providers¹ in Minneapolis and St. Paul with 3- and 4-star Parent Aware² ratings rose from 9% (at the start of P2Q) to 23% by July 2019.
- More than 6,000 high-quality child care slots were gained within Minneapolis and St. Paul between January 2015 and July 2019.
- After implementing the Parent Aware Retention Incentives for two years to 87 programs, 80% maintained their rating and stayed in business while 9% of providers went out of business and 11% of providers dropped their rating. This is in comparison to the 30 providers that applied but were not awarded where 47% went out of business and 17% dropped their ratings.
- Launch of the Build Your Own: Child Care Program has created 313 new child care slots in 19 newly-licensed child care programs.
- Over 9,000 families have signed up to receive the weekly ParentPowered Think Small texts.

Figure 1 presents the actual count and percentage of LFCCs in Minneapolis and St. Paul with 3- or 4-star Parent Aware ratings since the receipt of the P2Q grant.

Figure 1: Number and percentage of LFCCs in Minneapolis and St. Paul with a 3- or 4-star rating

¹In Minnesota, “family child care” is usually given in the provider’s home with no more than 14 children. Licensing is required if the children come from more than one unrelated family. “Centers” are generally outside the provider’s home, care for a larger number of children, and must meet staff qualification and training requirements (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2017a).

²Parent Aware (<http://parentaware.org/>) is Minnesota’s voluntary quality rating and improvement system for ECE programs (Tout, Starr, Isner, Cleveland, Soli, & Quinn, 2010). Participating programs receive a rating of 1 to 4 stars based on their use of practices that prepare children for kindergarten.

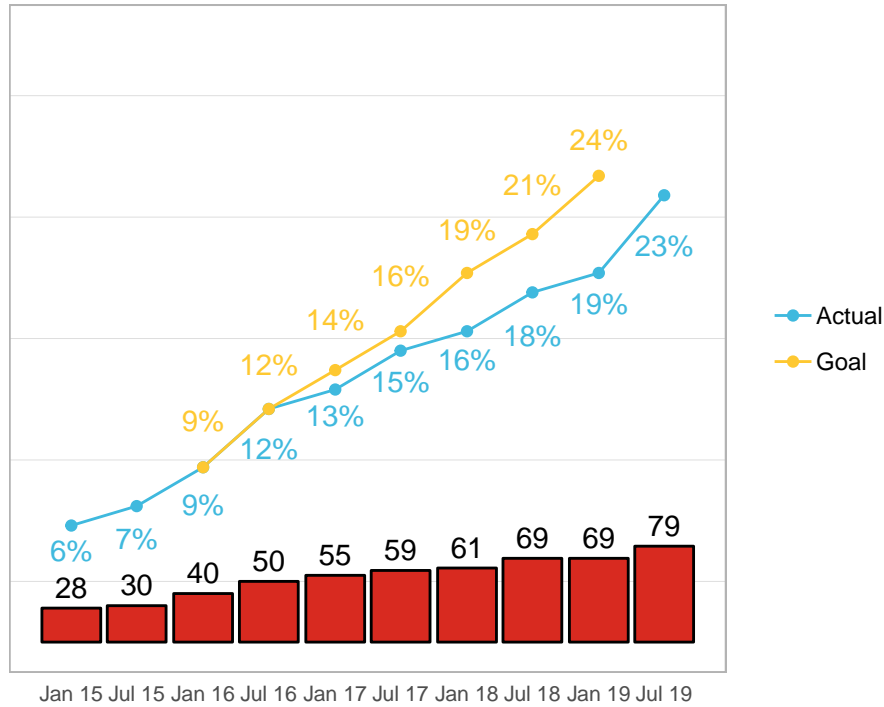
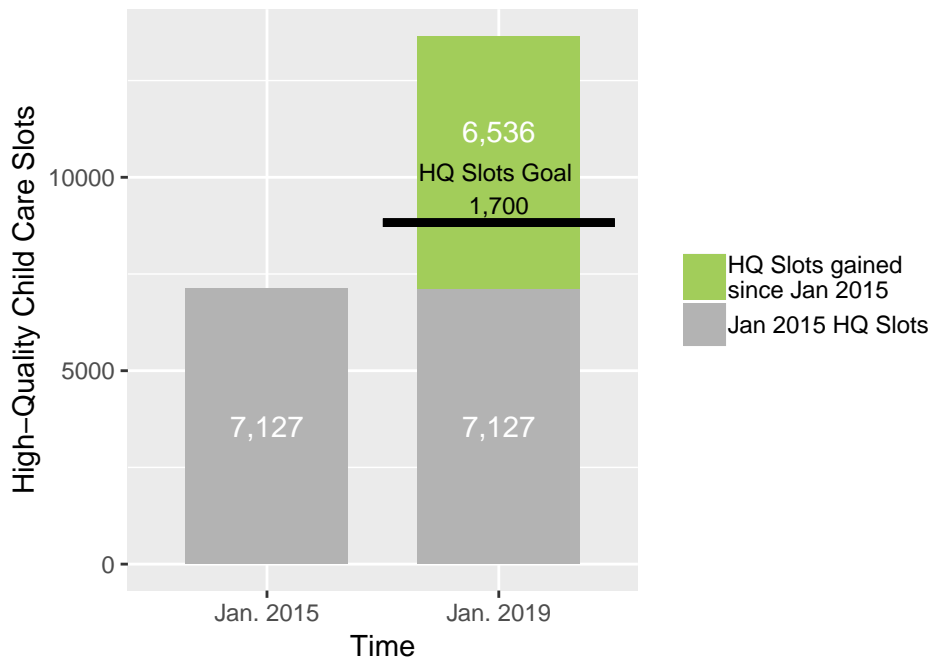


Figure 2 presents the number of high-quality child care slots (i.e., 3 or 4-star Parent Aware Rating) gained by LFCCs located in Minneapolis and St. Paul from January 2015 to January 2019.

Figure 2: High-quality child slots gained from January 2015 to January 2019, Minneapolis and St. Paul LFCCs.

LFCC High-Quality Child Care Slots Gained, Minneapolis and St. Paul (01/15 – 01/19)



Significant findings of this evaluation include the following:

- As of July 2019, a total of 129 ECE providers had received supports from P2Q.
- LFCC providers who received P2Q quality supports showed a greater improvement in Parent Aware ratings than those who did not.
- LFCC providers who received P2Q business supports stayed in business at higher rates than those who did not.
- Nearly 9,000 parents and caregivers have signed up for a text message intervention that aims to promote the importance of early reading habits to parents of young children.
- Through implementing P2Q, we learned that LFCC providers are closing at high rates, creating or exacerbating child care deserts.

Contents

- Executive Summary** **2**
- Overview and Purpose of the Report** **6**
- Section 1: Description of Pathways to Quality and Context of Implementation** **8**
 - Theory of Action 8
 - Program Design 8
 - Pathways to Quality Organization and Staffing 10
- Section 2: Participation in Pathways to Quality** **12**
- Section 3: Key Findings** **13**
 - Impact of Quality Supports 13
 - Impact of Business Supports 16
 - Impact of Social-Emotional Supports 18
 - Impact of Family Supports 18
- Section 4: Conclusion** **22**
 - Successes 22
 - Opportunities 23
- References** **24**
- Appendix A: P2Q Evaluation Questions and Methodology** **25**
 - A. Impact of Quality Supports 26
 - B. Impact of Business Supports 27
 - C. Impact of Social-Emotional Supports 28
 - D. Impact of Family Supports 29
 - Methodological Challenges 29
- Appendix B: P2Q Brochure** **31**
- Appendix C: Social-Emotional Checklist** **44**
- Appendix D: Telephone Survey of Closed Licensed Family Child Care Providers** **47**
- Appendix E: Overview of Implemented P2Q Programs** **51**

Overview and Purpose of the Report

Pathways to Quality (P2Q), launched in 2016 by Think Small and Generation Next, aims to improve the quality of early care and education (ECE) programs and outcomes for children younger than five in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties over a three-year period. Over the three years of the grant period, P2Q activities include the following:

- In year 1 (October 2015 to September 2016), P2Q leadership planned and designed the P2Q intervention and worked with the evaluation team to create questions and a design for program evaluation.
- In year 2 (October 2016 to September 2017), we began implementing P2Q and, based on preliminary program results, prepared this, the first evaluation report.
- In year 3 (October 2017 to September 2018), we will continue to implement P2Q, conclude the evaluation with a final report, and share findings with stakeholders.
- In year 4 (October 2018 to June 2019), we implemented new a P2Q intervention based on learnings, shared findings with stakeholders and established sustainability plans for efforts.

Evaluation has played an important role in P2Q since the beginning. The program's leadership and its evaluation team regularly meet to discuss evaluation topics and have worked closely to establish relevant evaluation questions (see Appendix A for the complete list of evaluation questions).

The purpose of this report is to provide a descriptive overview of the results of the first year of implementation (year 2 of the grant). The report is organized in four sections.

- Section 1 reviews the context of implementation of P2Q and describes the P2Q program, the theory of action on which it is based, and its organizational structure.
- Section 2 reports on the reach of P2Q as a whole and through its individual supports.
- Section 3 uses data from multiple sources to describe the progress being made by providers and families receiving P2Q services.
- Section 4 synthesizes the results, discusses how they can inform future implementation of P2Q, and suggests next steps based on the experiences of P2Q staff and the evaluation team over the first year of implementation.

This is the first report produced from the evaluation of P2Q, conducted by Parsimony and funded by Think Small and Generation Next.

Acknowledgments: Funding for Pathways to Quality (P2Q) and its evaluation is provided by the Bush Foundation. Think Small and Generation Next would like to thank our partners, ServeMinnesota, First Children's Finance, ParentPowered, Center for Inclusive Child Care, and Adults' & Children's Alliance, for helping deliver services to providers. We are also grateful to the Target Foundation, LENA Research Foundation, Reflection Sciences, Dr. Scott McConnell and his team at the University of Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Barb Wagner, and Katana Consulting for helping make P2Q possible through the services they continue to provide.

Section 1: Description of Pathways to Quality and Context of Implementation

In spite of Minnesota's reputation for educational excellence, the state has one of the worst achievement gaps in the nation (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2015). Too often, the children with the highest needs face an opportunity gap beginning in their earliest years. The vast majority of children younger than five in Minnesota are in some form of early care and education (ECE) program, including family- and center-based child care (Chase & Valorose, 2010). The most diverse of these providers, serving the most diverse children, are often not equipped and supported to prepare these children for success in kindergarten and beyond. These providers face language, cultural, financial, and educational barriers that prevent them from volunteering for and moving up through Minnesota's early learning quality framework, the Parent Aware quality rating and improvement system.

In response, Generation Next and Think Small partnered to launch the Pathways to Quality (P2Q) program with the goal of significantly improving the quality and outcomes of ECE for at least 1,700 children in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties over three years (2016 to 2018). The core idea is based on credible longitudinal studies demonstrating that access to high-quality early childhood programs is critical to improving long-term outcomes for children who experience barriers to kindergarten readiness (Pianta, Barnett, Burchinal, & Thornburg, 2009). With Bush Foundation support, P2Q strives to meet the unique challenges of early childhood professionals and support them in their self-determined pathways to quality. As a result, quality improvements in their programs should directly impact the children and families they serve, increasing the number of children embarking on a path to success in school and in life.

P2Q leverages Think Small's expertise in meeting the early learning workforce where they are and supporting them in building their quality to support the school readiness of the children they serve. Findings from P2Q evaluations will be used to inform state policy and implementation at both the administrative and legislative levels.

Theory of Action

An abundance of evidence shows that high-quality ECE programs can have a profound impact on later student success, especially for families with relatively few resources (Pianta et al., 2009). P2Q works to significantly increase the number of high-quality ECE programs in targeted communities and strengthen the skills of parents of young children, with the goal of supporting children's early learning and their school readiness as they enter kindergarten.

A logic model comprising inputs, outputs, and measurable outcomes for each support was constructed for P2Q. The underlying theory of action behind P2Q is summarized as follows:

- Children who attend high-quality ECE programs are more likely to be prepared for kindergarten.
- Providers who manage their business well are more likely to stay in business and be successful.
- Providers who support the social-emotional development of children in their care are better equipped to handle behavior challenges when they arise.
- Families that understand the importance of early literacy can better prepare their children to succeed academically.

Program Design

P2Q uses a multi-tiered support system focusing on providing research-based interventions to ECE providers, including supports in these four areas: quality, business, social-emotional, and family. Supports are offered at differing levels of intensity to meet individual providers' needs. The interventions and supports provided are aligned with Parent Aware standards. The main goal of P2Q is to help providers achieve a 3- or 4-star Parent Aware quality rating.

P2Q recruiters target providers in Minneapolis and St. Paul through email, phone, and in-person communications, as well as a print brochure (Appendix B). Providers interested in receiving supports meet with an early learning recruiter to identify their needs and goals. During this process, providers are matched with supports and specific interventions within those supports.

The following section describes the design of each of the supports offered through P2Q.

Quality Supports

Children who attend high-quality ECE programs are more likely to be prepared for kindergarten. As a result, the following P2Q services were designed to help providers improve the quality of their ECE programs.

- Think Small staff members facilitate learning communities with the intention of helping providers raise their Parent Aware quality ratings. These communities consist of groups of providers experiencing similar barriers, such as language or economic barriers. They take place over 6 to 12 months, with the number and frequency of meetings depending on the needs of the cohort.
- Think Small staff also provide one-on-one Parent Aware coaching for up to 20 hours per provider within a 6-month period. Coaching is focused on issues related to achieving and improving the provider's Parent Aware rating.
- Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC)³ provides literacy coaching and mentoring for a targeted group of providers who are hesitant to enter Parent Aware or are starting at a Parent Aware star rating of 1 or 2. MRC volunteer coaches are overseen by full-time MRC staff. Providers receive coaching 3 times a week for approximately 90 minutes throughout the academic year.
- One-on-one Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) coaching⁴ is offered to licensed family child care (LFCC) providers to help improve the quality of their instruction and provider-child interactions, focusing on three domains: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. CLASS coaching is provided for up to 10–15 hours over a 6-month period by Think Small staff who are trained by experts at the University of Minnesota. CLASS coaches conduct observational assessments of the provider using the CLASS assessment. The results from these observations are used to identify opportunities for growth in one or more domains.

Business Supports

In addition to offering a developmentally appropriate educational environment for young children, child care is, at its core, a small business. Minnesota is experiencing a decline in child care businesses across the state for a variety of reasons (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2017b). P2Q aims to help ECE providers with the challenges that often accompany running a small business by offering business leadership cohorts. Much like the learning communities described above, these cohorts, facilitated by staff from First Children's Finance, offer group learning on topics such as financial planning and business taxes. Over a 6-month period, participants engage in 4 group-based sessions totaling 14 hours. Group learning is augmented by 2 one-on-one coaching sessions for each participant, totaling up to 10 hours and focusing on helping individual providers with their business finances.

In 2018, Think Small also launched their Build Your Own: Child Care program focused on offering support to either starting or expanding a Licensed Family Child Care Program or a Licensed Child Care Center within Hennepin and Ramsey Counties by supporting interested parties with coaching and technical assistance through the child care licensing process, a basic understanding of available resources, and connections to Parent Aware supports. The program offers up to 20 hours of free technical assistance and support to participants.

Social-Emotional Supports

³An evaluation of MRC found evidence of a positive impact on children's literacy (Markovitz, Hernandez, Hedberg, & Silbergliitt, 2014).

⁴Despite early evidence of excitement among providers for CLASS coaching, P2Q had difficulty recruiting and is therefore considering modifying or removing CLASS from the list of supports provided.

Providers who lack the skills and knowledge to support the social-emotional development of children can experience difficulties in their business (e.g., when a child in their care experiences behavioral challenges) and can put increased strain on families (e.g., when they expel a child from their ECE environment).

Designed to equip providers with skills and knowledge to better support the social-emotional development of the children they serve, P2Q social-emotional supports include the following:

- Four times a year, the Center for Inclusive Child Care provides daylong (6- to 8-hour) social and emotional development trainings to help providers understand their role in supporting the social-emotional development of the children they serve. Among other things, providers are taught to have clear expulsion policies and to clearly communicate behavior expectations to children and parents.
- For providers who require more assistance, Think Small coaches provide one-on-one social-emotional development coaching for up to 20 hours over 6 months. Coaching focuses on helping providers change their own behavior and their program's environment to support children's social-emotional development. Providers are also given support while putting what they've learned into practice.

Family Supports

Children benefit from having parents who are engaged in their literacy and language development. Parent engagement is related to both short- and long-term benefits for literacy and reading skills (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002). Therefore, P2Q family supports are designed to help parents become more engaged in the literacy and language development of their children. Supports include the following:

- Over 9,000 parents and caregivers across the Minneapolis and St. Paul area have signed up for a text message-based curriculum that offers facts and tips for boosting their child's learning.⁵ Created and maintained by ParentPowered,⁶ the program sends parents three text messages a week until their child is eight years old. Messages are designed to help generate buy-in from the parent, enhance the parent's self-efficacy, and provide encouragement and reinforcement for parents to actively engage in literacy, numeracy, health and socio-emotional activities with their children.
- The LENA Start curriculum⁷ is a 13-week parent education program designed to promote parent-child interaction and early language development. P2Q adapted the curriculum in order to include ECE providers in addition to parents. Think Small staff trained by the LENA Research Foundation use a LENA recorder, a device that records and analyzes the language vocalized around the child wearing it, to measure the quantity and quality of verbal communication between adults and the child over an entire day (usually around 16 hours). After each recording, providers and parents are given reports of their progress and taught strategies to promote language interactions with children.

Pathways to Quality Organization and Staffing

P2Q is a partnership with Generation Next with service delivery led by Think Small, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and supported by 4.8 full-time-equivalent positions. A significant portion of P2Q's services, however, are provided through partners, including the following:

- Through ServeMinnesota's strategic initiative MRC,⁸ volunteer tutors implement a research-based curriculum with ECE providers, aimed at improving the literacy and reading skills of the children they serve.
- First Children's Finance⁹ provides one-on-one business coaching to providers interested in improving their business's finances.

⁵An evaluation of Ready4K!, a variant of the texting program implemented here, found strong evidence of a positive impact on parent engagement, among other outcomes (York & Loeb, 2014).

⁶<https://ready4k.parentpowered.com>

⁷LENA Start is provided by the LENA Research Foundation (<https://www.lena.org/>). Evaluation of LENA Start is currently underway, led by researchers from the University of Minnesota.

⁸<https://minnesotareadingcorps.org/>

⁹<http://www.firstchildrensfinance.org/>

- ParentPowered, a public benefit corporation, designed and maintains the text-message intervention.
- The University of MN partnered with us on the LENA project and provided one full time graduate assistant to provide weekly support with the LENA products and devices and production of progress reports to parents and programs.

Section 2: Participation in Pathways to Quality

The key indicators presented below, based on participation as of July 2019, provide an overview of enrollment during the first three years of Pathways to Quality (P2Q) implementation:¹⁰

- 163 early care and education providers have participated in P2Q.
- 85 providers have received P2Q quality supports.
- 57 providers have received P2Q business supports.
- 35 providers have received P2Q social-emotional supports.
- 23 early childhood professionals have received P2Q family supports.
- 9,019 parents have enrolled in the text-message intervention designed to improve parent engagement.

¹⁰Providers can and do participate in more than one support, resulting in duplicate counts.

Section 3: Key Findings

Previous work has identified a significant gap in the availability of high-quality licensed family child care (LFCC) providers in the state of Minnesota (Werner, 2016). Furthermore, Pathways to Quality (P2Q) leadership has observed that the majority of children of color and linguistically diverse children in the state are served by LFCCs. Because of the particular focus of P2Q on improving the quality of LFCCs, the key findings presented in this report are specific to LFCC providers and do not include child care centers. P2Q's leadership and its evaluation team developed a list of evaluation questions designed to measure the impact and progress of the P2Q program (Appendix A). This section reports key findings identified through the year 1 evaluation, grouped into four areas corresponding to the areas in which P2Q offers support:

1. Impact of P2Q quality supports
2. Impact of P2Q business supports
3. Impact of P2Q social-emotional supports
4. Impact of P2Q family supports

For details about the measures used for the outcomes, definitions, and general approaches taken to estimating the results presented in this section, please see Appendix A, which is organized in the same way as this section. For details about the Pathways to Quality programs implemented between July 2016 and July 2019, the successes met by each program, and program scalability information, please see Appendix E. Please note that this analysis covers participants served from July 2016 to June 2019.

Impact of Quality Supports

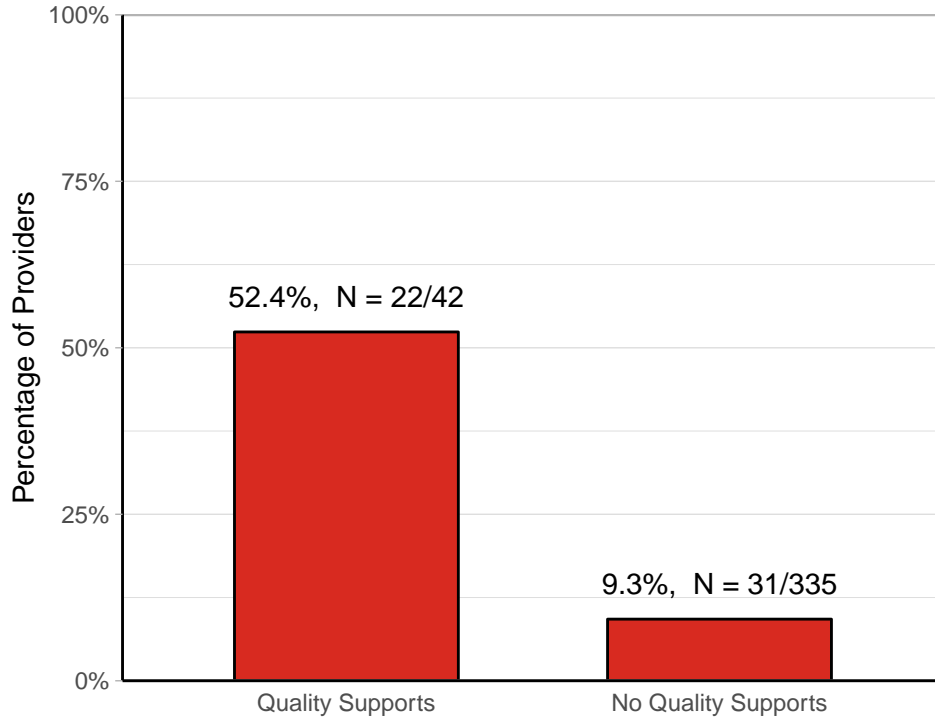
Key findings related to the impact of P2Q quality supports are organized by two questions, each of which relates to P2Q's theory of action:

1. Do providers make progress in obtaining or improving their Parent Aware rating?
2. Are children better prepared for kindergarten?

Do providers make progress in their Parent Aware rating?

Figure 2 shows that providers who started out without a Parent Aware rating and then received P2Q quality supports had higher rates of obtaining a Parent Aware rating (52%) between July 2016 and July 2019 than did providers who did not receive P2Q quality supports (i.e., LFCC providers in Minneapolis and St. Paul who did not participate in P2Q's quality support program, 9%). Although these results are positive and suggest that P2Q quality supports may be helping to increase engagement in Parent Aware among LFCC providers, it should be noted that the total number of providers who received P2Q quality supports and were thus eligible for this analysis is quite small compared to eligible providers who did not receive P2Q quality supports (n=42 versus n=335, respectively), and as a result, these numbers should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 2: LFCC providers in Minneapolis and St. Paul obtaining a Parent Aware rating, with and without P2Q quality supports, July 2016–July 2019¹¹



Though the sample size of providers who received P2Q quality supports is small (85) compared with those who did not receive them (402), providers who received P2Q quality supports display promising trends in improved Parent Aware ratings relative to their counterparts. Table 1 presents the number and percentage of providers in Minneapolis and St. Paul whose Parent Aware rating either decreased, showed no change, or increased from July 2016 to July 2019, broken out by whether or not they received P2Q quality supports. The results suggest that a higher percentage of providers who received P2Q quality supports than those who did not increased their Parent Aware rating (about 48% versus 8%). As with the previous results, these results should not be interpreted as definitive, given their preliminary nature and small sample sizes.

¹¹Sample sizes (N = 22 and N = 31) represent the number of LFCC providers who started with no Parent Aware rating between July 2016 and January 2019, who achieved a Parent Aware rating by July 2019. Note that roughly 30% of providers open in July 2016 had closed by July 2019.

Table 1: Minneapolis and St. Paul LFCC providers' Parent Aware rating changes, with and without P2Q quality supports, July 2016–July 2019¹²

Provider Group	Decrease	No Change	Increase	Total
No Quality Supports	26 (6.47%)	342 (85.07%)	34 (8.46%)	402
Quality Supports	9 (10.59%)	35 (41.18%)	41 (48.24%)	85

Are children better prepared for kindergarten?

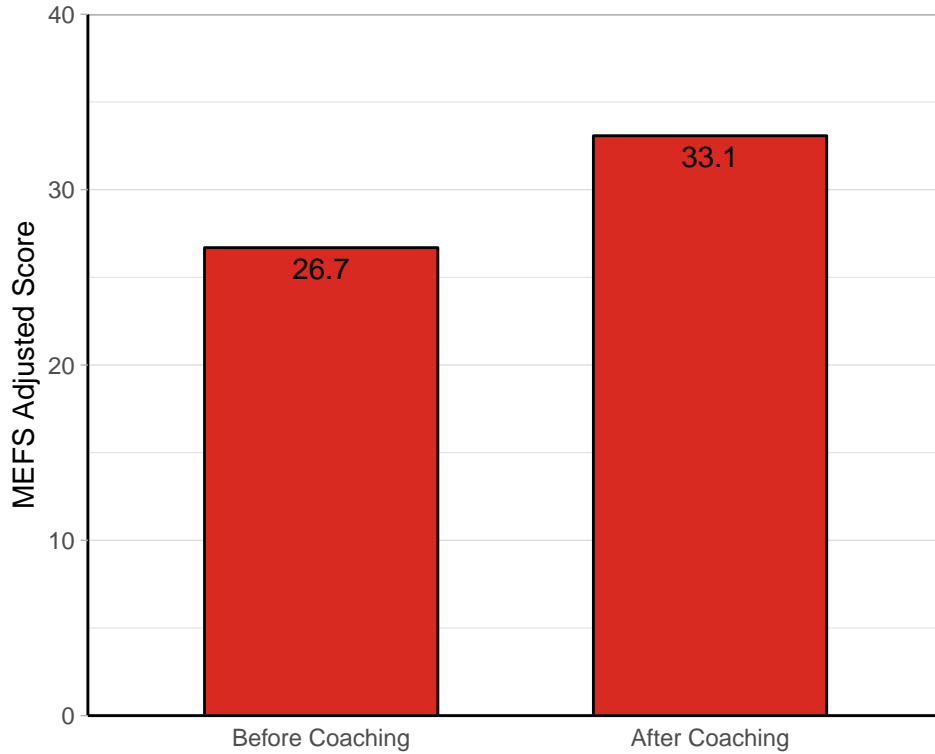
Figure 3 shows an increase in children's average executive function scores¹³ (from about 27 to 33) after their providers received P2Q quality supports. This gain represents a movement from about the 42nd percentile before P2Q quality supports to about the 45th percentile after P2Q quality supports (compared with a normative dataset provided by the authors of the Minnesota Executive Function Scale, or MEFS¹⁴). These results suggest that improvements in the quality of LFCCs may have a positive impact on children's executive functioning. However, while these results are promising, it should be noted that not all of the children served by providers who received P2Q quality supports participated in executive function testing. As a result, the reported gains may be misleading, as they may over- or understate the impact of P2Q quality supports on children's executive functioning.

¹²Total sample sizes represent the number of LFCC providers that remained open from July 2016 to July 2019. Note that roughly 30% of providers open in July 2016 had closed by July 2019.

¹³Executive functioning is a measure of how well a child can plan, organize, and complete tasks. This measure was used as a proxy for kindergarten readiness in part because of a lack of a commonly agreed upon, high-quality, age-appropriate measure of kindergarten readiness for very young children in the state of Minnesota.

¹⁴<http://reflectionsociences.com/services/mefs/>

Figure 3: Children’s average adjusted MEFS scores before and after their LFCC providers received P2Q quality supports (N = 120)



Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC) tutors also assessed children’s preliteracy skills while delivering services to a subset of providers. On average, there was an increase in the scores on rhyming, alliteration, picture naming, letter sounds, and letter names. Collectively, these results suggest that MRC services helped to increase these children’s preliteracy skills, making them better prepared for kindergarten. It should be noted that experimental evidence suggests that MRC is an effective evidence-based intervention helping to improve students’ literacy and reading skills (Markovitz, Hernandez, Hedberg, & Silberglitt, 2014).

Impact of Business Supports

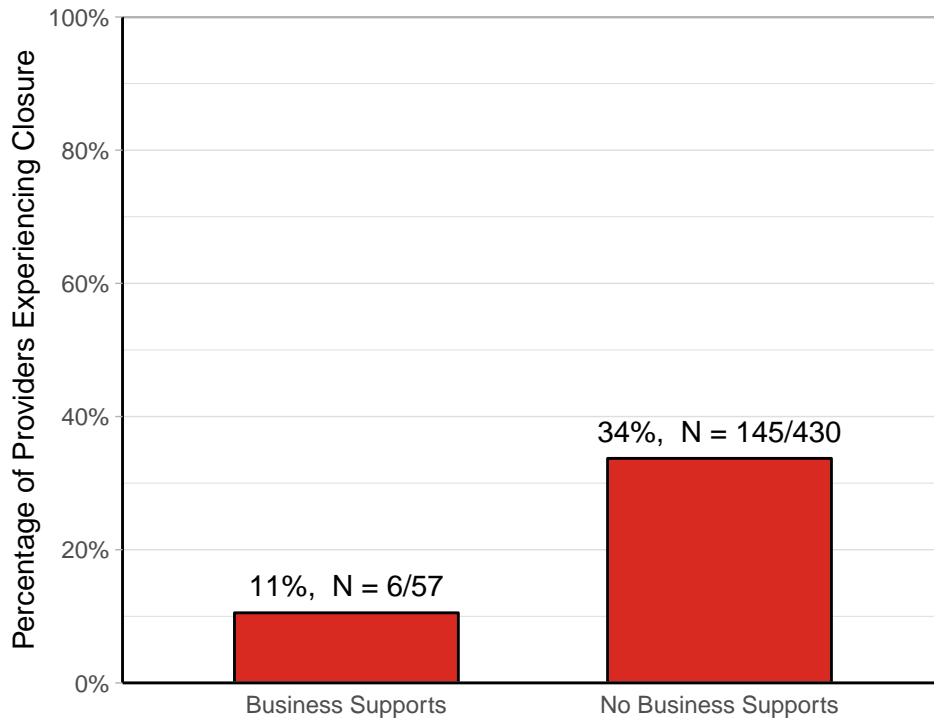
Key findings on the impact of P2Q’s business supports are organized by two questions, each of which relates to P2Q’s theory of action:

1. Are providers who receive P2Q business supports more likely to stay in business?
2. Why do providers choose to close their businesses?

Are providers who receive P2Q business supports more likely to stay in business?

Figure 4 shows that providers who received P2Q business supports had lower rates of business closure (from July 2016 to July 2019) compared to providers who did not receive P2Q business supports (11% versus 34%, respectively). Note that although this is a promising result, the total number of providers receiving P2Q business supports during this time frame was far less than the number of providers who had not received P2Q business supports (N=57 versus N=430), and as such, the results should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 4: Percentage of LFCC providers experiencing business closure, July 2016–July 2019, with and without P2Q business supports.



Why do providers choose to close their businesses?

A telephone survey¹⁵ of 30 closed LFCC sites in Minneapolis and St. Paul conducted between January and March of 2017 revealed that personal or family matters were the most frequent reasons for closing (44%), followed by business reasons (36%). Examples of personal reasons included a spouse’s passing away and the provider’s becoming ill or experiencing an injury. Business reasons often made reference to challenges or issues with licensing (e.g., “too many rules,” “licensing wouldn’t give a variance”).

Most respondents reported that their business was profitable (87%), and most said they didn’t face immediate challenges, with 67% reporting that they had been open for more than a year before they started to see potential challenges to staying in business. With regard to receiving outside professional support to help their business, 46% said they had received such support, and all of those respondents said the support was helpful. This information as to why providers enter the business and why they leave provides a baseline for the future direction of P2Q’s business supports.

¹⁵Thirty of the 102 closed LFCC providers in Minneapolis and St. Paul agreed to participate (response rate of 29.4%). See Appendix D for the telephone survey questions.

Impact of Social-Emotional Supports

Key findings related to the impact of P2Q social-emotional supports are organized by one question, which relates to P2Q's theory of action:

1. Do providers make progress in their skills and capacity to serve children demonstrating challenging behaviors?

Do providers make progress in their skills and capacity to serve children demonstrating challenging behaviors?

The evaluation team found no evidence of a change among participating providers in their tendency to establish clear expulsion policies after receiving supports. This finding, however, was due in large part to the very small number of providers who received social-emotional coaching and had relevant outcome data. For example, seven providers received social-emotional coaching during July 2016–January 2017, but only four had data on the extent to which they had clear expulsion policies, as measured by a social-emotional checklist.¹⁶ Two had clear expulsion policies both before and after supports, and two had not yet established clear expulsion policies by the end of the evaluation period.

During their observations, social-emotional coaches also recorded the number of successful opportunities providers had over a period of about an hour to support a child's self-regulation. Data for this outcome were available for all seven providers and suggest a slight decrease, from an average of 4.8 successful opportunities before coaching to an average of 3.8 after receiving P2Q social-emotional supports. Additional data from future cohorts will help the evaluation team determine whether there is a relationship between P2Q social-emotional supports and providers' increased skills and capacity to serve children demonstrating challenging behaviors, as well as how P2Q coaching can be improved if necessary.

Impact of Family Supports

Key findings related to the impact of P2Q family supports are organized by two questions, both of which relate to P2Q's theory of action:

1. Do parents show increased engagement with their children?
2. Do children make progress in their language skills?

Do parents show increased engagement with their children?

Although this area of support of P2Q is not being formally evaluated, parents were recruited to participate in a text message–based intervention that promotes parent engagement in children's early literacy (Markovitz et al., 2014). Enrollment has seen a tremendous increase since the beginning of this effort in January 2017, having reached more than 1,400 parents and caregivers as of August 2017. P2Q and the evaluation team expect this evidence-based intervention to help promote parent engagement in early literacy and to show resulting positive outcomes as enrollment continues to increase.

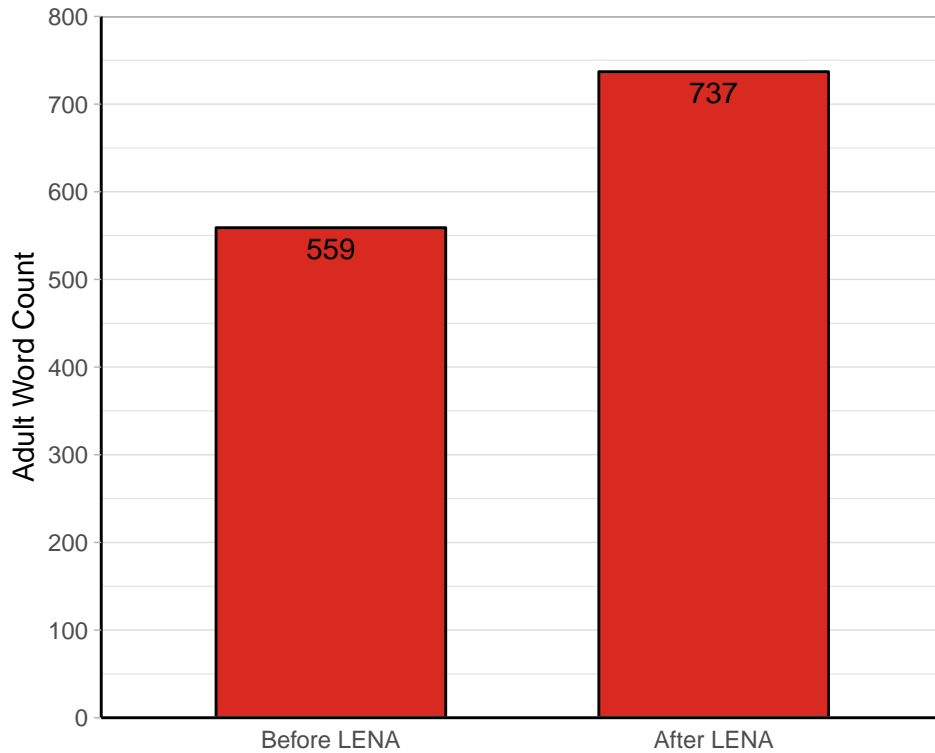
Another measure of parent engagement was captured using the LENA recorder, a device that records and measures the amount of language vocalized around the child wearing it. Figure 5 shows an increase in the average number of words spoken near a child over approximately a 16-hour period by an adult (not counting TV and other media) before and after parents received P2Q family supports (from 559 to 737 words). This gain represents a movement from about the 20th percentile before P2Q family supports to about the 47th percentile after P2Q family supports, compared with a normative dataset provided by the authors of the LENA Start curriculum (Gilkerson & Richards, 2008). Although these results suggest a substantial positive effect, they carry three important caveats: (1) data were not available for all children whose families participated in this support; (2) a child's parents may not account for all the adult words

¹⁶The social-emotional checklist (Appendix C) is an observational checklist developed by P2Q leadership and the evaluation team to measure the extent to which providers are adhering to practices that support children's social-emotional development, including establishing clear expulsion policies. On-site observations were carried out by social-emotional coaches.

analyzed¹⁷ because the LENA recorder does not differentiate between parents and other adults; and (3) the LENA intervention was delivered to both parents and providers, and therefore the increase may reflect an increase in the engagement of parents, providers, or both.

¹⁷The authors believe vocalizations from child care providers were minimized because parents were instructed to take off the recorder when dropping the child off at child care and put it back on when picking the child up.

Figure 5: Adult word count before and after LENA recorder P2Q family supports (N = 30).



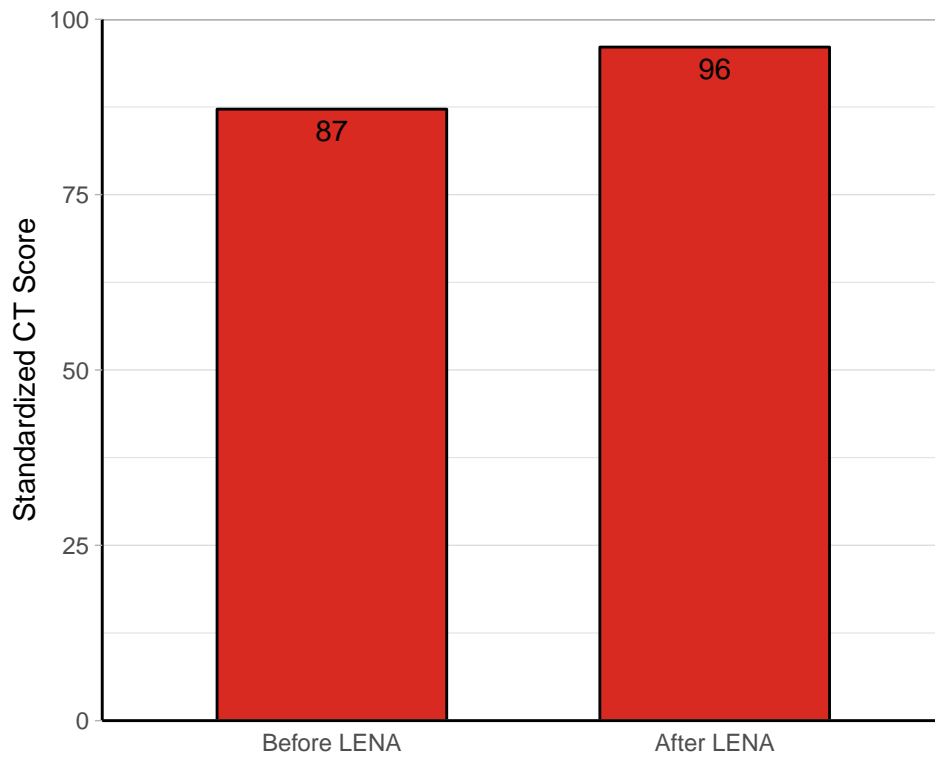
Do children make progress in their language skills?

Data capturing the number of “conversational turns” (CTs, i.e., adult-child alternations in conversation), as measured by the LENA recorder over a full day (about 16 hours), were also used to evaluate children’s preliteracy skills. Figure 6 shows a slight increase in the median standardized score¹⁸ for CTs between children and adults after receiving P2Q family supports (from 87 to 96). This gain represents a movement from about the 20th percentile to the 40th percentile (compared with a normative dataset provided by the authors of the LENA Start curriculum). As with the data on adult word count, data were not available for all children whose parents received P2Q family supports. Collectively, however, the results suggest that the LENA Start curriculum may be an effective intervention to help close the “word gap”¹⁹ through quality ECE programs.

¹⁸Scores are standardized by the child’s age to take into account appropriate developmental expectations.

¹⁹A seminal 1995 study estimated that by age three, children in low-income families hear 30 million fewer words than those in affluent families, a finding that has come to be known as the “word gap” (Hart & Risley, 2003).

Figure 6: Median number of conversational turns, standardized by child's age, before and after P2Q family supports (N = 30)



Section 4: Conclusion

The results of this evaluation largely show positive outcomes for providers who participated in the various supports offered by Pathways to Quality (P2Q). However, because of a number of limitations of this evaluation,²⁰ readers should interpret the results with caution. This section describes successes of P2Q and opportunities for the future.

Successes

P2Q saw continued successes in the second year of implementation (year 3 of the grant) and onwards.

- **Texting:** The texting partnership with ParentPowered was launched in fall of 2017 initially as a tool for Think Small to engage families in helping to prepare children for Kindergarten. Through over 400 partnerships developed, Think Small has reached over 9,000 parents and caregivers. The texts are now available in four languages: English, Spanish, Somali and Arabic, and there are plans to add a fifth language. As the texting tool matured, Think Small has collaborated with organizations in sending out specialized text to certain populations such as Hennepin County by sending out text reminders on well baby care appointments. Think Small recognizes that because this tool has such a broad reach of people involved and interested - it provides the opportunity to raise the importance of early childhood and kindergarten readiness outside of the early childhood field.
- **FaCET** provides a vehicle for parents and staff from diverse cultures to better understand each other and to create an environment where all children thrive. The Family and Community Engagement Tools (FaCET) survey for Early Care and Education promotes and measures family engagement via questions that reflect what families care most about. Through P2Q, Think Small was able to train seven trainers across the state and currently nine providers are using the program. Through this progress the training became approved in our professional development system (DEVELOP) and can now be used to train additional providers in the future and supply them with credit on their career lattice.
- **PA Retention Incentives:** After implementing the Parent Aware Retention Incentives for two years to 87 programs, 80%, maintained their rating and stayed in business while 9% of providers went out of business and 11% of providers dropped their rating. This is in comparison to the 30 providers that applied but were not awarded where 47% went out of business and 17% dropped their ratings.
- **Build Your Own:** Child Care was launched in the summer of 2018 in response to the increasing decline in child care programs across the state, commonly referred to as the child care crisis. Based on our extensive work with families, child care providers, policymakers, and stakeholders, we believe that the way to make the most significant impact on this crisis is to prioritize investments that increase the capacity of high-quality child care providers. We believe that by creating pathways that effectively and efficiently leverage technology and innovative strategies, we can significantly increase the number of high-quality child care slots available to families. In the process of creating these pathways, we will leverage existing work and develop models and technology platforms that will be scalable, with the potential for deployment statewide and beyond. Ultimately, significant investment in this approach will achieve a triple bottom line: (1) supporting employment for working families, (2) supporting Minnesota's economy by boosting the business of child care, and (3) supporting young children by preparing them for success in kindergarten and beyond. To date the Build Your Own: Child Care has created 360 new slots within 25 child care programs, of which 23 are participating in Parent Aware.
- **MEFS study:** In the second year of the P2Q project, Think Small implemented a small pilot measuring children's executive functions using the Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS). Executive functioning represents a broad set of skills that enable individuals to meet adaptive goals. These skills are necessary for academic success. To be successful academically, children must be able to do things like concentrate, follow directions from teachers, get along with other children, and control their impulses. This study of 42 children from a handful of providers in Minneapolis and St. Paul showed that children

²⁰These limitations are described in Appendix A.

in high-quality programs with enhanced P2Q quality supports performed better on the MEFS than the national average.

Opportunities

P2Q leadership has identified several opportunities for improving P2Q supports and will be acting on those opportunities in the coming year. For example, P2Q staff discovered that parents and providers were unfamiliar with the concept of executive functioning, its importance for kindergarten readiness, and the Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS). This barrier made it difficult to recruit providers and parents into executive function interventions. In response, P2Q leadership will work with the MEFS team in the fall of 2018 to design resources to help overcome these challenges.

In lieu of a statewide kindergarten readiness assessment, Think Small conducted a larger study to determine if the MEFS could be a good proxy for school readiness. The purpose of the second study was to compare the executive functioning scores of children in high-quality programs to children that were in programs not rated in Parent Aware. This study included 149 children from providers around the state.

The results of the study showed that executive function in children was generally unrelated to the quality rating of their child care provider. However, difficulties in recruiting providers to participate in the study yielded a much smaller sample of participating children than was originally intended, limiting the ability to detect an effect if one was present.

P2Q and the LENA Start Foundation discussed at length developing and implementing a new curriculum called LENA Grow, since the conclusion of the LENA Start intervention in May of 2019, specifically aimed at family child care providers to promote provider-child interactions and early language development. However, after much discussion, Think Small decided that the LENA Grow model was cost prohibitive in bringing it to scale for the state of Minnesota. The University of MN has a journal article under review for possible publication that would report the results of the LENA Start evaluation.

Part of the Pathway to Quality intervention strategy was to target providers that serve low-income and ethnically-diverse families. As Think Small began to implement these interventions, it recognized when adaptations needed to be made for each culture and language. Making these changes was not an initial goal of the interventions, but it quickly became evident that if they were to be successful, adaptations must be made. There were major language and cultural adaptations that were made to MEFS tool, Texting, LENA Start held the first Hmong language group in the country and staffing models were adjusted in both business leadership and coaching work to better work with Somali providers. we are working on formalizing how we look at cultural adaptations. Think Small will think creatively about how we can continue to influence leaders and providers in the early childhood field to more broadly adopt a practice of adapting our work and programming to be reflective of different cultures and languages.

Finally, although providers initially expressed excitement about receiving Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) coaching, recruitment proved to be difficult, with very few providers ultimately signing up. P2Q leadership and the evaluation team will explore the reasons for these challenges and use the findings to either modify the delivery of CLASS coaching or replace it with another quality support intervention.

References

- Chase, R., & Valorose, J. (2010). *Child Care Use in Minnesota: Report of the 2009 Statewide Household Child Care Survey*. St. Paul: Minnesota Department of Human Services.
- Gilkerson, J., & Richards, J. A. (2008). *The LENA natural language study*. LENA Technical Report 02-2. Boulder, CO: LENA Research Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.lenafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/LTR-02-2_Natural_Language_Study.pdf.
- Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (2003). The early catastrophe: The 30 million word gap by age three. *American Educator, Spring*, 4–9. Reprinted from Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Markovitz, C. E., Hernandez, M. W., Hedberg, E. C., & Silberglitt, B. (2014). *Impact evaluation of the Minnesota Reading Corps K–3 Program*. Chicago, IL: NORC at the University of Chicago.
- Minnesota Department of Human Services (2017a). *Child care programs*. St. Paul: MDHS. Retrieved from http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=id_054359.
- Minnesota Department of Human Services (2017b). *Licensed child care trends in Minnesota: Fact sheet years 2005–2015*. St. Paul: MDHS. Retrieved from <http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/licensing/documents/defaultcolumns/dhs-292314.pdf>.
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (2015). *The nation's report card: 2015 mathematics and reading assessments*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2015/#?grade=4.
- Pianta, R. C., Barnett, W. S., Burchinal, M., & Thornburg, K. R. (2009). The effects of preschool education: What we know, how public policy is or is not aligned with the evidence base, and what we need to know. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 10(2), 49–88.
- Sénéchal, M., & LeFevre, J. A. (2002). Parental involvement in the development of children's reading skill: A five-year longitudinal study. *Child Development*, 73(2), 445–460.
- Tout, K., Starr, R., Isner, T., Cleveland, J., Soli, M., & Quinn, K. (2010). *Evaluation of Parent Aware: Minnesota's quality rating and improvement system pilot*. St. Paul: Minnesota Early Learning Foundation Research Consortium.
- Werner, M. (2016). *A quiet crisis: Minnesota's child care shortage*. Mankato, MN: Center for Rural Policy and Development. Retrieved from <http://www.ruralmn.org/publications/a-quiet-crisis-minnesotas-child-care-shortage/>.
- York, B. N., & Loeb, S. (2014). *One step at a time: The effects of an early literacy text messaging program for parents of preschoolers*. NBER Working Paper No. 20659. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Appendix A: P2Q Evaluation Questions and Methodology

Pathways to Quality (P2Q) leadership and the evaluation team developed an initial set of evaluation questions in the summer of 2016. These questions have been adapted over time to respond to changes in P2Q’s operations and procedures made in response to the needs of participants. Table A.1 lists the current evaluation questions, which are designed to measure the effectiveness of the theory of action for P2Q. These questions also guide the yearly evaluation of P2Q.

Table A.1: P2Q evaluation questions

A. Impact of P2Q quality supports: Do P2Q quality supports improve the quality of services provided by providers?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do providers make progress in obtaining or improving their Parent Aware rating? 2. Are children better prepared for kindergarten?
B. Impact of P2Q business supports: Do P2Q business supports increase the business stability and financial viability of licensed family child care providers?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are providers who receive P2Q business supports more likely to stay in business? 2. Why do providers choose to close their business?
C. Impact of P2Q social-emotional supports: Do P2Q social-emotional supports improve provider practices in supporting children’s social-emotional development?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do providers make progress in their skills and capacity to serve children demonstrating challenging behaviors?
D. Impact of P2Q family supports: Are P2Q family supports related to positive child outcomes?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do parents show increased engagement with their children? 2. Do children make progress in their language skills?

The following section addresses the methodology and data sources used to answer each of these evaluation questions in turn. While delivering services, P2Q staff collected data on the participating providers, as well as the parents and children they were serving, who agreed to have their data collected. All primary data were collected on site. Occasionally this evaluation compares outcome data on participants against those of comparison groups that did not receive P2Q services. Data for these comparison groups often come from existing, publically available normative data; therefore it is unknown whether members of comparison groups received supports that could have impacted outcomes of interest.

All of the analyses in the evaluation were limited to licensed family child care (LFCC) providers and the families that received services from them.

A. Impact of Quality Supports

Do providers make progress in obtaining or improving their Parent Aware rating?

To examine the relationship between receiving P2Q quality supports and the likelihood of participating in Parent Aware, the authors obtained data from the Minnesota Department of Human Services’ list of LFCC sites. First, the evaluation team created a dichotomous outcome reflecting whether or not providers were participating in Parent Aware as of July 2019. The sample was then restricted to include only providers who started with no Parent Aware rating between July 2016 and January 2019, and who stayed open until at least July 2019, resulting in a sample size of 377. Of these, 42 providers received P2Q quality supports and 335 did not. The authors then regressed this dichotomous outcome (0 = Not participating in Parent Aware, 1 = Participating in Parent Aware) on a participation flag indicating whether the provider received P2Q

quality supports. The results of this logistic regression suggested that receiving P2Q quality supports was related to participating in Parent Aware by July 2019 ($\beta = 2.4$; $p < 0.05$).

To examine the relationship between receiving P2Q quality supports and the likelihood of increasing one's Parent Aware rating, a trichotomous outcome was first created by comparing each provider's Parent Aware from their first possible record between July 2016 and January 2019 against that provider's rating in July 2019: 0 = No change, 1 = Decreased rating, 2 = Increased rating. Next, a multinomial logistic regression model was fitted by regressing the trichotomous outcome against a dichotomous variable reflecting whether or not the provider received P2Q quality supports. The results suggested that relative to providers who did not receive P2Q quality supports, those who did receive them were much more likely to increase their Parent Aware rating rather than maintain the same rating ($\beta = 3.9$; $p < 0.05$). The results, however, also suggested that these providers' ratings were somewhat more likely to decrease than to stay the same ($\beta = 1.2$; $p < 0.05$), as compared with providers who did not receive P2Q quality supports.

Although one-on-one Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) coaching was offered to providers to help improve the quality of their early care and education (ECE) programs, very few providers enrolled, resulting in an extremely small sample size for CLASS observational data ($N = 7$); moreover, some of those observations had incomplete data. As a result, this evaluation excludes CLASS results. P2Q leadership and the evaluation team will examine the reasons for this low rate of participation in CLASS coaching and make modifications as indicated.

Are children better prepared for kindergarten?

To examine the relationship between kindergarten readiness and P2Q quality supports, the authors used a measure of executive functioning as a proxy for kindergarten readiness. This decision was due in part to the lack of a commonly agreed upon, high-quality, age-appropriate measure of kindergarten readiness for very young children in the state of Minnesota.

Executive functioning was measured through the Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS), a tablet-based application developed by Reflection Sciences, a Minnesota company. MEFS captures executive function data associated with tasks the child is asked to complete (e.g., number of tasks completed correctly, time to complete a task, etc.). The MEFS software is computer adaptive and provides a series of scores, among them an "adjusted score," or aggregate score accounting for performance and speed. This score is standardized by age to take into account expected developmental differences in performance. Higher scores indicates a higher level of executive functioning. Overall, the 120 children on whom data were collected showed improvement on these scores after their ECE providers received P2Q quality supports (from a mean adjusted score of 27 to 33). This change was statistically significant ($\beta = 6.2$, $p < 0.05$).

B. Impact of Business Supports

Are providers who receive P2Q business supports more likely to stay in business?

To examine the relationship between P2Q business supports and staying in business, evaluators used longitudinal data from the Minnesota Department of Human Services to identify when LFCC businesses opened and closed. The evaluation team identified LFCC providers that were open in July 2016 and determined whether or not they were still open by July 2019. A dichotomous variable was then created reflecting whether or not the provider received P2Q business supports. Likewise, a dichotomous variable reflecting whether the provider had closed by July 2019 was created. The sample used for analysis consisted of 366 providers who did not receive P2Q business supports and 53 who did receive P2Q business supports.

A logistic regression model was fitted, regressing the closure status of the business (0 = Open, 1 = Closed) on the dichotomous variable reflecting whether or not the provider received P2Q business supports (0 = No business supports, 1 = Received business supports). Providers that opened their business between August 2016 and January 2019 were discarded from the analysis. The results suggest that P2Q business supports was related to whether providers were open in July 2016 and still open by July 2019 ($\beta = 12.02$, $p > 0.05$). Specifically, providers receiving P2Q business supports were about 70% less likely to experience closure over this timeframe compared to providers who had not P2Q received business supports.

In addition to understanding the role support services play in a business's stability and financial viability, project organizers were interested in learning more about why child care businesses choose to close. This question was answered through a telephone survey of closed sites. Think Small staff contacted the owners of Minneapolis and St. Paul LFCCs that closed between January 2015 and January 2017 and asked them to participate in a short phone survey. The survey of closed sites used a wider time frame than the analysis of P2Q business supports in an attempt to obtain a larger sample. Thirty former LFCC business owners agreed to participate in the survey (a response rate of 29.4%).

Roughly 62% of respondents said they had expected to stay in business permanently, compared with 38% who had expected to be open for only a limited time. Personal or family concerns were identified as the most frequent reason for closing (44%), followed by business reasons (36%). Most respondents said their business was profitable (87%), and most said they didn't face immediate challenges upon opening, with 67% of respondents reporting that they had been open for more than a year before they started to see potential challenges to staying in business. A large percentage of providers (46%) said they had received outside professional support to help their business, and 100% of those respondents said this support was helpful.

C. Impact of Social-Emotional Supports

Do providers make progress in their skills and capacity to serve children demonstrating challenging behaviors?

To examine the relationship between P2Q social-emotional supports and the skills and capacity of providers to serve children demonstrating challenging behaviors, P2Q leadership and the evaluation team created a social-emotional checklist (Appendix C).²¹ This checklist is an observational protocol designed to measure the extent to which providers are adhering to practices that support social-emotional development in children.

The social-emotional checklist was completed by coaches, who rated providers on indicators such as having a detailed expulsion policy and communicating clear behavioral expectations. Coaches completed the checklist prior to delivering P2Q social-emotional supports and regularly during delivery to identify areas for improvement and inform the suggestions and strategies provided during coaching.

Data on the social-emotional checklist, collected for seven LFCC providers (although not all providers had complete data), addressed the following key activities:

- Having clear expulsion guidelines
- Communicating clear behavioral expectations
- Supporting development of self-regulation

Response options for the first two of these observations were “never,” “sometimes,” and “always,” indicating how often providers engaged in the targeted behaviors. The third element was reported as a count (the number of times a targeted event occurred over about an hour-long observation).

To examine progress on these indicators, the evaluation team calculated percentages or means (depending on the scale of the response) for providers' scores from before and after the provision of supports. There was no evidence of a change among providers in their tendency to establish clear expulsion policies after receiving supports, due in large part to the very small number of providers with relevant outcome data. Two of the four providers with data on expulsion policies had clear expulsion policies both before and after supports, and the other two had not yet established clear expulsion policies by the end of the intervention. Of the seven providers receiving social-emotional coaching, none had data on behavioral expectations before and after receiving coaching. Finally, there was a slight increase in the number of successful opportunities providers had to support a child's self-regulation following their enrollment in P2Q social-emotional supports (from an average of 3.9 to 4.3 successful instances during a one-hour observation). The sample size for this outcome was four.

²¹P2Q leadership and the evaluation team considered collecting data on expulsions and disciplinary actions taken toward children but decided to focus instead on provider behavior in order to reduce the burden of data collection on P2Q staff and providers.

Given the very low number of providers who participated in social-emotional coaching and the even smaller number for whom evaluation data were complete, these results should be interpreted with caution. Additional data from future cohorts will help the evaluation team determine whether receiving P2Q social-emotional supports is associated with an increase in providers' skills and capacity to support the social-emotional development of children demonstrating challenging behaviors.

D. Impact of Family Supports

To understand the relationship between P2Q family supports and increased parent engagement, the evaluation team examined data on adult word counts and conversational turns captured by the LENA recorder before, during, and after parents and providers received the LENA Start intervention. Data were evaluated for each child whose parent(s) and provider were enrolled, with each child having between 4 and 12 observations with data. Each observation corresponded to aggregate data (aggregate adult word count or total conversational turns) per day of recording (usually about 16 hours). To measure parent/provider progress, the evaluation team used data from the first and last observations, representing values before and after providers and parents received the LENA Start intervention. Means for these pre- and post-intervention scores were calculated and compared with normative data from the LENA Research Foundation to arrive at percentiles (word count) and standardized scores (conversational turns) (Gilkerson & Richards, 2008).

Do parents show increased engagement with their children?

The mean adult word count of parents and caregivers combined before the LENA Start curriculum was 559 per day, corresponding to a percentile rank of 20. The mean after the curriculum was 737, for a percentile rank of 47, suggesting a significant improvement in the average number of adult words spoken around the child.

Do children make progress in their language skills?

The evaluation team examined increased conversational turns (i.e., adult-child alternations in conversation) as a proxy for progress in children's language skills. The median conversational turn score before the curriculum was 87, corresponding to a percentile rank of 20, whereas after the curriculum it was 96, corresponding to a percentile rank of 40. Again, the results suggest students made progress in their language skills. However, an important caveat to keep in mind is that the LENA recorder does not differentiate between different adults (e.g. parent, grandparent, etc.), which may slightly obscure the results, inasmuch as the words and conversations of adults not participating in the intervention may have been captured. Additionally, because both providers and parents received the intervention, it is not possible to know which adults contributed most to children's language progress.

Methodological Challenges

This evaluation conformed to a correlational study design. Specifically, LFCC providers and parents chose whether or not to participate in P2Q. Additionally, those who participated chose which supports and which services within those supports they wanted to receive. The decision-making process and the factors that providers and parents considered when making these decisions were not measured. Furthermore, adequate control variables that might act as proxies for these factors were not available for this evaluation. These challenges make it impossible for this evaluation to attribute any positive outcomes definitively to participation in P2Q and its particular supports.

P2Q leadership and the evaluation team have identified opportunities to bolster the internal validity of this evaluation without increasing the burden of data collection on staff or providers. For example, some outcomes required active data collection before and after providing supports, but these data were not always collected at both of these time points, resulting in potential sampling bias and inaccurate results. To address this issue, P2Q leadership and the evaluation team will put together a plan for ensuring that data are collected at the proper time points with high fidelity.

Another example of an opportunity is the gathering of additional data to better understand the self-selection process providers go through when deciding to sign up for P2Q and specific supports. Collecting such data may allow P2Q leadership and the evaluation team to better tease out the effect of P2Q on some of the outcomes of interest (e.g., business closure, change in Parent Aware rating, etc.).

Appendix B: P2Q Brochure

Pathways to Quality

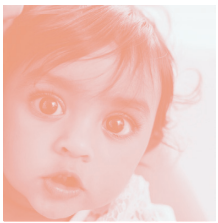
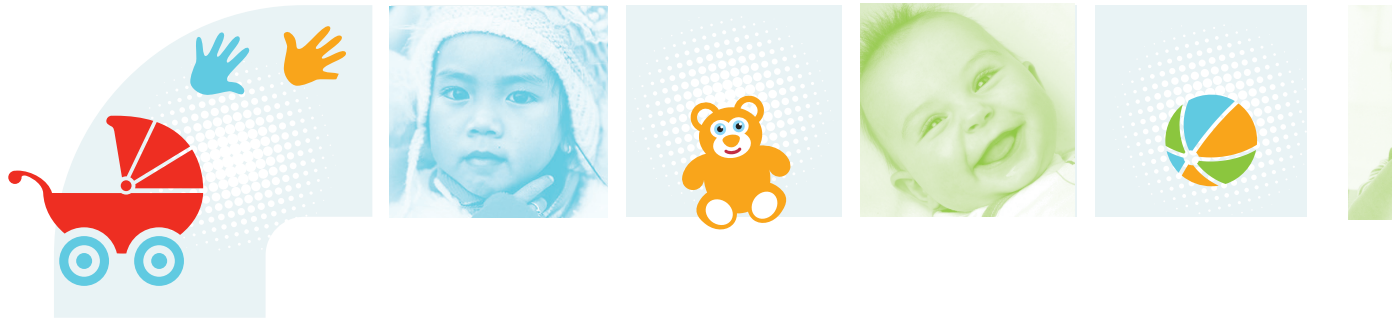


think
small[®]
LEADERS IN EARLY LEARNING

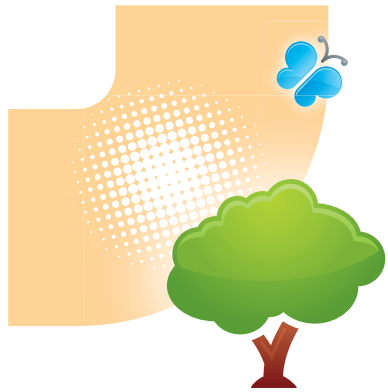
Children from low-income families face the steepest obstacles to success. Too many children start kindergarten behind and never catch up. **It's crucial that children in our communities are ready for success in school and life.**

Helping children learn, beginning from birth, is the best way to give all children the start they deserve.

Families, neighborhoods, and communities are stepping up to tackle this challenge by improving the quality of early care programs across the Twin Cities.



You can be a leader in this field. Join us, choose the best path for you, and get the support you need along the way.



**think
small**[®]
LEADERS IN EARLY LEARNING

Pathways to Quality is a project **providing support to child care providers** across the Twin Cities to **address the needs of children in their care.**



Q: *What are the benefits of joining Pathways to Quality?*

A: Highlighted below are just a few of the benefits:

- ✓ Help all children be ready for kindergarten
- ✓ Increase your professionalism
- ✓ Help reduce opportunity and achievement gaps
- ✓ Receive direct support and help from experienced early care professionals
- ✓ Become eligible to receive Early Learning Scholarships, which financially support year-round care for children from low-income families
- ✓ Receive higher CCAP reimbursement rates
- ✓ It's free. All trainings and services are free of charge

Q: *How do I participate?*

A: TWO EASY STEPS!

1

Sign up to learn more.

Return the form on the back cover.



2



Meet with an early learning recruiter to map out your path.

Choose which options work best for you and create your own pathway to quality.

OPTION 6
Partner with MN Reading Corps

OPTION 5
Reduce the Word Gap

OPTION 4
Small Group Learning Community



OPTION 1
One-on-one Professional Coaching to Improve Provider and Child Interaction

OPTION 2
One-on-one Coaching to Address Social and Emotional Issues

OPTION 3
One-on-one Child Care Business Coaching



Pathways to Quality



► One-on-one Coaching to Improve Provider and Child Interaction

OPTION

1

Research shows **positive interactions** between child care providers and the children in their care **develop children's thinking, problem solving, and language skills**. This is an opportunity to work one-on-one with a **professional coach** to **build your skills** and promote children's brain development.

Q: *What is Coaching?*

A: Professional coaching offers you the opportunity to work one-on-one with an experienced child care professional.

Your coach can **address issues specific to your program**, offer suggestions, and help implement early learning best practices. All coaches are employees of Think Small and have years of experience. **Coaches are able to offer supportive, encouraging, and individual guidance that builds on your strengths.**

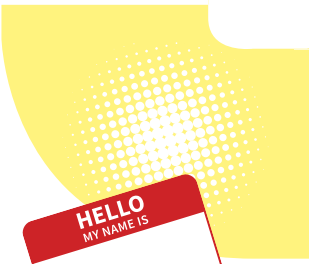


▶ One-on-one Coaching to Address Social and Emotional Issues

OPTION 2



Children with challenges in typical care settings have difficulty learning. Work one-on-one with an experienced coach who specializes in supporting children with these issues. **Your coach will help you address challenges specific to your program, listen to your concerns, suggest best practices, and help you implement strategies for the future.**



Our coaches are here for you:



Mai Chee:

- Has worked in early learning for 5 years
- Fluent in Hmong and English



Bureeqo:

- Fluent in Somali and English
- Coached over 200 child care providers in Minnesota

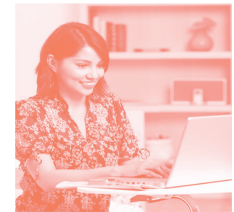


Nina:

- Has worked in early learning for 30 years
- Specializes in social and emotional behavior

"My coach became my mentor and she still is. I have a great deal of respect for her and the work that she does."

-Trinette, Child care provider in Minneapolis for 16 years



One-on-one Child Care Business Coaching

Are the **financial pressures** of operating your small business weighing on you? Are you **concerned you're not going to be able to keep your doors open**? Learn how to **improve your business**, find gaps in your financial plan, and keep your child care running for years to come. **Financial experts from First Children's Finance**, with experience working with hundreds of child care programs, will **address your specific situation**, go through your financial records with you, and **provide personalized feedback** to support your program's stability.

OPTION

4

► **Small Group Learning Community**

Meet with other child care providers to talk about child care challenges together. Learn, work, and improve your program with the help of an experienced group leader. **Grow your professional network with other providers from your community**, while learning to provide the best quality care.

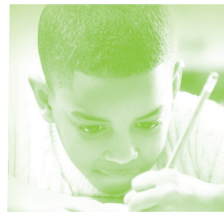


OPTION

5

► **Reduce the Word Gap**

By age four, children from high-income families are exposed to 30 million more words than children from low-income families, leaving lasting effects on a child's reading ability later in life. Think Small is working with child care providers to **measure the words a child hears** in a day, and to **train parents and providers on new ways to talk together to their child**. Work with one of our trained professionals to implement this project in your program and **help reduce the Word Gap**.



By school's year-end, four- and five-year-old students in Minnesota Reading Corps classrooms outperform students in comparison classrooms.



Minnesota Reading Corps

Regularly providing one-on-one instruction to children can be difficult. Reading Corps helps change that. Reading Corps is a group of **specialized early literacy tutors that partner with family child care programs to offer literacy instruction to children.** Together, provider and Reading Corps tutors **teach children of all ages and at all levels the beginnings of literacy.**

Ready to begin your adventure?
Turn the page to see an example of the path chosen by a provider named Angela.



Angela's Path

Angela is a child care provider in Minneapolis. She has worked in the field for 10 years, and lately she's struggled to meet the needs of the children in her care while also earning enough money to make ends meet. She thinks her dual-language program can be a stronger asset to her community, and she wants to learn how to improve her child care program.



OPTION 4 | Small Group Learning Community

Angela joins a small Group Learning Community of other Spanish speakers to learn more about improving the quality of her program. She connects with other providers, learns how to incorporate a dual-language curriculum in her program, and improves her assessments.



OPTION 3 | One-on-one Child Care Business Coaching

Now that Angela has improved the quality of her program, she receives one-on-one business coaching to improve her program's finances. She learns how to identify money gaps, strengthen her policies, and keep her books organized.



OPTION 5 | Reduce the Word Gap

Angela uses her new business knowledge and improved quality to add a new project to her program. She gets trained on how to measure the words heard by children during the day and best tools to improve interactions with children every day. This project also involves the child's parents, who love learning how to improve the way they care for their child at home.



Angela ends her path by receiving the highest quality Parent Aware rating possible.

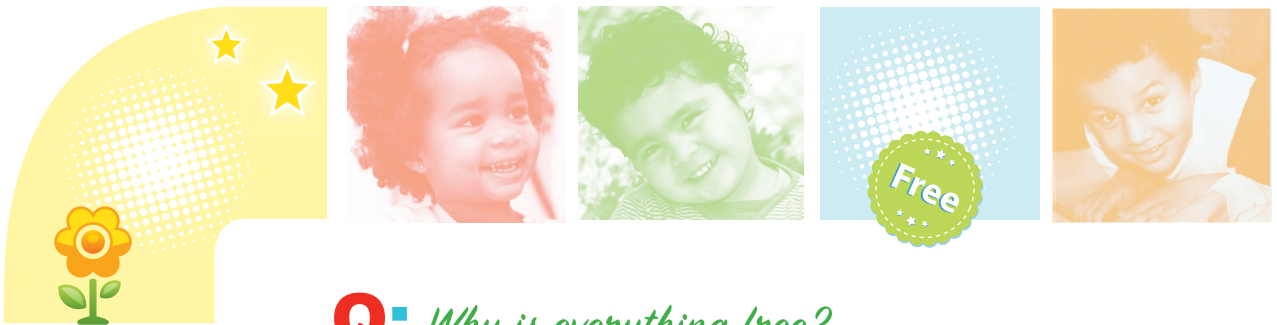
- She is now eligible to accept Early Learning Scholarships and higher CCAP rates, serving children from low-income families who otherwise could not afford year-round care
- Angela is confident she is meeting the needs of the children in her care and ensuring their future success



Pathways to **Quality**

Q: *What is Parent Aware and why is it a part of this program?*

A: Parent Aware is Minnesota's tool to measure the quality of early childhood programs along the same standards. Programs are rated from one to four stars for the level of kindergarten readiness best practices they incorporate.



Q: *Why is everything free?
What will I need to pay?*

A: This project is funded with a generous grant from the Bush Foundation. Because of this grant, and our partnership with Generation Next, all services in this program are offered free of charge to participants.

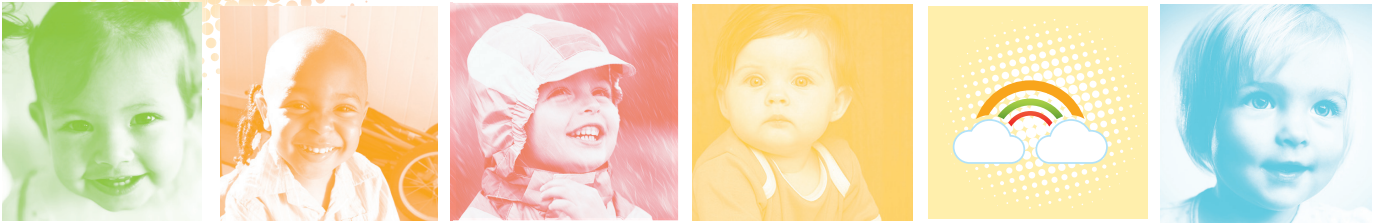


Q: *How much time will it take?*

A: To say child care providers are busy is an understatement. We know that your days are already full, and we are willing to map out your path based on your busy schedule. It will take time and work, but we will support you every step of the way.

Learn More

Fill out the form below to learn more about your path to quality.



Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Program Type:

- Family Child Care
 Center Based Child Care

Are you currently Parent Aware Rated?

Circle one: YES NO



Send completed information to

Think Small
Pathways to Quality
2021 Hennepin Avenue East
Suite LL20
Minneapolis, MN 55413

info@thinksmall.org
651-641-0305
fax: 651-645-0990



Appendix C: Social-Emotional Checklist

P2Q Social Emotional Checklist

Coach Name: _____

Date: _____

Site ID: _____

1. Expulsion Policy - Discuss effects of expulsion on children and families (COACH: add detailed notes to note box)

2. Provided CLEAR BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS (provider visual reminders) ie., schedule and expected behaviors. Circle one

Always

Sometimes

Never

3. OFFER CHOICES OF ACTIVITIES. Circle one

Always

Sometimes

Never

4. TEACHING METHODS - Record the number of times you observed Successful Opportunities - (using a variety of teaching methods to engage children (auditory, visual, etc)

5. TEACHING METHODS - Record the number of times you observed Missed Opportunities - (using a variety of teaching methods to engage children (auditory, visual, etc)

6. MODEL & TEACH SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL PROBLEM SOLVING - Record the number of times you observed Successful Opportunities - (using verbal or visual hints and cues)

7. MODEL & TEACH SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL PROBLEM SOLVING - Record the number of times you observed Missed Opportunities - (using verbal or visual hints and cues)

8. SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT of SELF-REGULATION - Record the number of times you observed Successful Opportunities (displays of positive interaction, using naturally occurring disagreements, reminding a child to sit on a chair instead of stand, walk instead of run, etc)

9. SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT of SELF-REGULATION - Record the number of times you observed Missed Opportunities - (displays of positive interaction, using naturally occurring disagreements, reminding a child to sit on a chair instead of stand, walk instead of run, etc)

10. Resources Coach Supplied to Provider (Ordered resources and materials were implemented how?)

11. Coaching Notes

Appendix D: Telephone Survey of Closed Licensed Family Child Care Providers

Hello, may I speak to [Name of Provider]?

My name is [Name of Interviewer] and I'm calling from Think Small. We're conducting a survey of licensed child care sites that have closed to learn more about the reasons they close. Are you available for a short interview?

Great! After each question, I'll give you some options for a response. You'll also have an opportunity to add more details to your answer. Are you ready to begin?

Okay. Here goes.

1. When you started, how long were you expecting to run a child care program?

- Permanently
- Short-term

2. Do you have anything to add about how long you were expecting to run a child care program?

3. Which of the following factors was most likely the reason for you closing your child care program?

- Personal: (family concerns, medical, housing maintenance)
- Career Opportunity: (e.g. job offer, new business opportunity)
- Financial reasons: (not being able to "make ends meet" or lack of long term business financial planning)
- Business reasons: (childcare regulations/licensing rules, lack of enrollments, competition)

4. Do you have anything to add about the reasons for closing your child care program?

5. How soon after you opened your child care business did you start to see potential challenges to staying in business?

- 0-3 months
- 4-9 months
- 10-12 months
- Over a year

6. Do you have anything to add about how long you were expecting to run a child care program?

* 7. Was your business profitable?

- Yes
- No

8. Approximately how long did it take to break even considering your monthly expenses?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- Over 2 years
- Don't know

9. Do you have anything to add about the profitability of your child care program?

10. How many months and/or years were you in operation before you closed your child care business?

* 11. Did you have any outside professional support to help you in your business?

Yes

No

12. What support did you receive and from where?

13. Was the support you received helpful?

Yes

No

14. What services or resources would have helped your child care business?

So that completes the interview. Do you have any questions for me?

Well thank you very much for going through this interview with me. We really value your feedback. Have a wonderful day!

Appendix E: Overview of Implemented P2Q Programs

The following table presents the Pathways to Quality programs implemented between July 2016 and July 2019, the level of success each program met, and information on the scalability of each program.

P2Q Program	Participants' Perception (positive, negative)	Outcome (positive, negative, no change)	Scalability of Intervention*
Parent Aware Coaching	Positive	Positive	This was not a new intervention, rather additional capacity to a proven intervention.
CLASS Coaching in Licensed Family Child Care	Positive	No change	While there was great interest in CLASS coaching for LFCC, it did not meet any Parent Aware rating requirements and therefore was not as successful as anticipated. However, there is research to support CLASS coaching contributing to positive child outcomes and therefore should be considered in future Parent Aware Indicator review processes.
Learning Communities	Positive	Positive	The success of P2Q Learning Communities contributed to the statewide implementation of Learning Communities delivered by the Child Care Aware system funded by DHS.
Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC)	Positive	Positive	MRC data showed positive child outcomes, however given the significant amount of resources needed per program to implement the model it would be require significant resources to scale this model statewide.
Social and Emotional Training	Positive	Positive	Child care providers consistently request trainings focused on developmentally appropriate way to support the social and emotional growth of children. As a result, these trainings were attended at high rates, with consistent wait lists.

Social and Emotional Coaching	Positive	Positive	The success of this intervention contributed to DHS launching a new mental health consultant model statewide.
LENA	Positive	Positive	LENA data showed positive child outcomes, however given the significant amount of resources needed per program to implement the model it would be require significant resources to scale this model statewide.
ParentPowered Texts	Positive	Positive	The response to family and providers signing up for texting has been very positive. Think Small had decided to scale this program throughout Minnesota in a way that highlights the importance of early childhood in preparing children for K.
Business Coaching (in partnership with First Children’s Finance)	Positive	Positive	This was not a new intervention, rather additional capacity to a proven intervention.
Business Coaching (Build Your Own)	Positive	Positive	The positive outcomes of this model in conjunction with the intentional design of the program position it to be a statewide scalable model. We have received additional philanthropic dollars to expand this program in low income communities in the metro area.
Parent Aware Retention Incentive	Positive	Positive	The success of the Parent Aware Retention Incentives contributed to the increased Quality Improvement Support grants available to Parent Aware participating providers funded by DHS.
Website Development Training	Negative	No change	Currently, this training is not scalable as a significant number of child care providers lack basic technology skills and confidence.

* Think Small has received philanthropic funds to support its policy and advocacy efforts to scale positive learnings from this grant.