

Pathways to Quality: Closing the Opportunity Gap

1 The Problem

Minnesota has one of the worst achievement gaps in the nation, which research shows starting in children as young as 18 months old. Improving the kindergarten readiness best practices in early learning and care programs is a smart and effective way to help close gaps and make sure all children are ready to succeed in kindergarten, a key milestone for predicting success in school and in life.



The Plan

Think Small and Generation Next are partnering, through a major investment in education from the Bush Foundation, to expand access to high-quality child care for Minnesota's children with high needs, improving the number of children starting kindergarten ready to succeed. This partnership will meet the unique challenges facing early learning professionals and support them to incorporate higher quality care and kindergarten readiness best practices through a multi-tiered set of interventions, while also working with families and the early learning community to help close the opportunity gap.

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The Work



- Provide enhanced coaching and training to child care providers participating in Parent Aware with a focus on providers serving culturally and linguistically diverse children and families
- Create Learning Communities for providers facing shared barriers
- Expand the Minnesota Reading Corps partnership, which brings an early literacy program and teacher into child care settings, to additional providers



Improve Quality

- Connect and assist child care providers with supports and guidance about best business practices, including implementation of a help line
- Provide one-on-one business coaching to child care providers



Stabilize Programs

- Deliver intensive literacy supports to families with young children experiencing significant gaps in vocabulary, also known as the word gap
- Provide parents and providers with weekly text messages designed to support a child's literacy, math, health, and social and emotional development for children ages birth to five years



Support Families

- Train child care professionals on social and emotional development issues
- Coach providers one-on-one to address social and emotional problems



Reduce Expulsions

- Gather and analyze data to track progress and inform program and policy change across our quality improvement system
- Create pathways to smooth the transition from pre-k to kindergarten



Track Progress and Bring it to Scale

4 The Impact



Improve the quality of 100+ early learning programs in three years, which will improve the kindergarten readiness levels of 1,700+ children from underserved communities in Hennepin and Ramsey counties.

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