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Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program

Summary of Annual Report

This fact sheet gives an overview of the Annual Report on the evaluation of the first year of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program. The summary includes what has been learned thus far about its effects on children, families, early care and education (ECE) programs, and the targeted communities in Saint Paul, Minnesota. The Annual Report summarizes quantitative and qualitative data for the first year of implementation.



What is the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program model?

The model has three major interventions.

- Parent Mentoring, which uses home visiting to provide parents with information about the characteristics and benefits of high-quality ECE programs
- Scholarships for low-income families to use to pay for high-quality ECE programs for their three- and four-year-old children
- Implementation of an ECE program quality rating system (called Parent Aware) to rate and monitor ECE program quality

Eligible families in the Thomas-Dale and North End neighborhoods in Saint Paul, Minnesota, apply to receive scholarships to use for their children to attend ECE programs rated as high-quality by Parent Aware.

Who has enrolled in the scholarship program so far?

- Approximately 500 children participated in parent mentoring and/or received scholarships during 2008.
- Two hundred fifty-one children were eligible to use their scholarship funds during 2008 and 177 of them were enrolled in an ECE program during fall 2008 using their scholarship funds.*

What are the child and family characteristics of participants in the outcome evaluation?

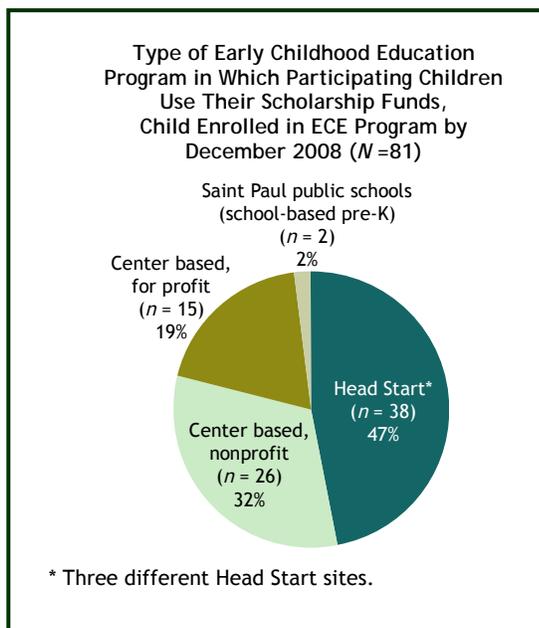
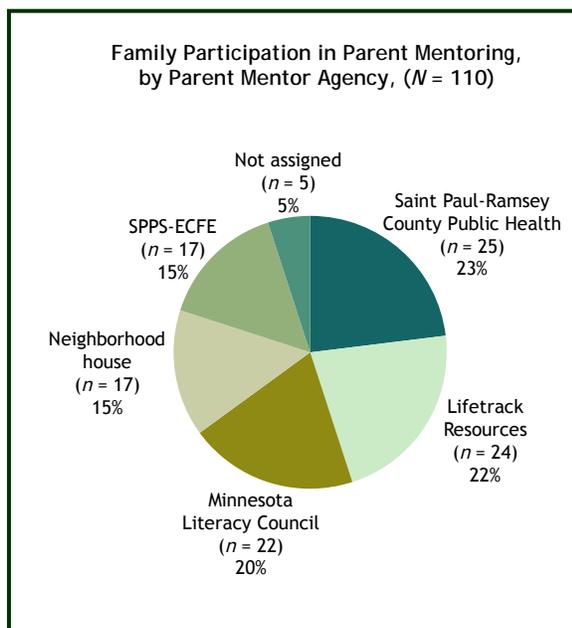
- Many children are English language learners. A little over half of the families reported that their primary language was English (58%), with Hmong (13%) and Karen (12%) being the next most common home languages.
- An ethnically diverse group of children are participating in the scholarship program. Of those reporting ethnicity on the application forms, 33% of parents identified their children as African-American and 24% of parents identified their children as Asian-American.
- About three-fourths of the families (72%) had household incomes below 100% of Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG); the remainder were between 100 and 185% FPG.

*The outcome evaluation includes only 150 of the 251 children who would attend 2 years of a high-quality ECE program and enter kindergarten in 2010. A second cohort of children will enroll in an ECE program using their scholarship funds in fall 2009 and enter kindergarten in 2011.



Who is providing families with parent mentoring, and what ECE programs are children attending?

- Families were evenly distributed across the 5 different parent mentoring agencies participating in the scholarship program.
- About half the children (47%) were using their scholarship funds to attend a Head Start Program and half (51%) were using their scholarship funds to attend a center-based ECE program. No children were using their scholarship funds to attend a family-based child care program.
- About two-thirds (63%) of the children were using their scholarship funds to attend an ECE program full time.



What has been learned in the first year about successful implementation?

- Collaboration was identified as key to successful implementation and to reaching the goals of the scholarship pilot program.
- Capitalizing on existing expertise was also important for successful implementation (e.g., ECE programs' and home visiting agencies' experience working with low-income and diverse families in the pilot community).
- Over the first half of the year, clarity of procedures needed to be improved so that staff and families in the pilot community understood how the pilot program operates and know what is expected of them to participate effectively. Subsequent activities were undertaken to develop, clarify, and disseminate procedures and information about the scholarship program.
- By midyear, participating staff suggested that, for a number of reasons, the supply of high-quality programs available for families to choose for their children was not sufficient and needs to be increased. Subsequent activities have been undertaken to regularly identify and monitor the supply of available slots.

What are the next steps?

During 2009, the evaluation will collect data on the developmental outcomes and school readiness of participating three- and four-year old children. More information also will be available about how parents choose ECE programs for their children to attend and how ECE programs use the scholarship funds to provide high-quality programs for children from low-income households.

