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Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Evaluation: Year 3



Summary of Year 3 Annual Report

This fact sheet summarizes the Year 3 Annual Report on the evaluation of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program. The summary includes what has been learned thus far about the program's effects on children, families, early care and education (ECE) programs, and the targeted communities in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

What is the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program model?

The model has three major interventions.

- Parent Mentoring through home visiting to provide parents with information and resources¹
- Scholarships for low-income, 3- to 4-year old children to attend high-quality ECE programs
- ECE program quality rating system (called Parent Aware) to rate and monitor program quality

Eligible families in the Thomas-Dale and North End (and beginning in Fall 2009, Payne-Phalen) neighborhoods applied for 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 650 children participated in parent mentoring and/or received scholarships.
- 449 children were eligible to use their scholarship funds between 2008 and 2010, and 348 of them were enrolled in an ECE program using their scholarship funds.²

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 home language was English (56%), with Karen (13%) and Hmong (9%) 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, 21% of parents identified their children as African-American, and 18% of parents identified their children as Asian.
- About three-fourths of the families (72%) had household incomes below 100% of Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG); the incomes of the remainder were between 100 and 185% FPG.
- About half of the families (48%) received financial assistance from Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), and almost one-fifth (17%) received assistance from Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) at the time the application form was completed.

How have ECE program supply and quality changed from 2008 to 2010?

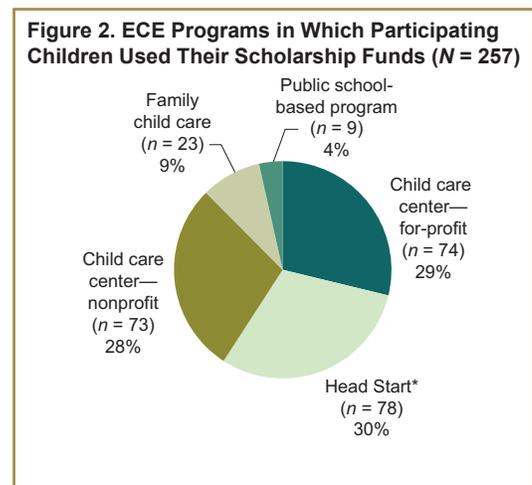
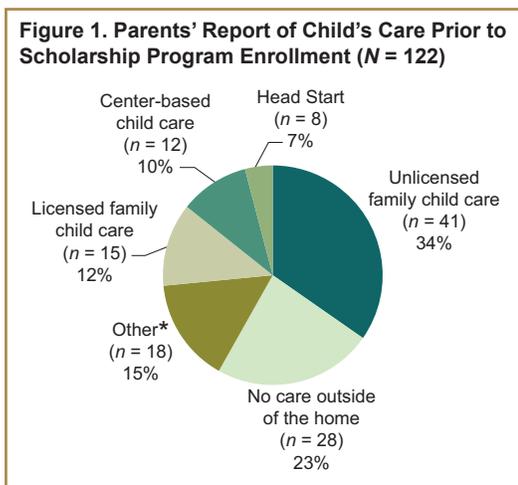
- At baseline in 2008, 221 programs were licensed to provide care in and near the pilot areas. Prior to the Parent Aware Rating system, the only indicator of quality was licensure, which provides information only about whether the program is compliant with very basic health and safety standards. We used this number as a proxy for available programs that were eligible to participate in Parent Aware and subsequently enroll children with scholarship funds if the program met high quality standards by Parent Aware.
 - Approximately 10 to 15% of possible ECE programs ($N = 221$) in and near the pilot areas participated in Parent Aware.
 - The number of high-quality programs (3- and 4-stars) in and near the pilot area increased more than 55%, from 22 programs to 34.
 - Programs that became highly rated included six center-based programs, four nonprofit, one for-profit, one Head Start site, and seven family child care programs.

¹ Information about parent mentoring is included in the Year 2 Annual Report.

² The outcome evaluation includes only 257 of the 449 children who could attend 2 years of a high-quality ECE program, enter kindergarten in 2010 or 2011, and were consented to participate in the evaluation.

What ECE Programs are children attending?

- Prior to receiving a scholarship, the majority of children were cared for in unlicensed care (57%), either by family members in the child's home or in unlicensed care in another's home (Figure 1).
- After receiving a scholarship, all children are attending high-quality ECE programs in or near the pilot area (Figure 2).
 - Over half (57%) are using their scholarship funds to attend a center-based ECE program (nonprofit or for-profit).
 - One-third of the children (30%) are using their scholarship funds to attend a Head Start program.
 - Nearly one in ten of children (9%) are using their scholarship funds at a family child care program, and 4% of the children are attending a public school-based program.
- The most common reason for selecting an ECE program reported by parents was quality (34%). Parents stated that the quality of the program was more important to them than either location or cost of the program.



What are the preliminary child outcomes?

- Children participating in the Scholarship Program showed significant increases in language and early math skills across the first year of enrollment in a high-quality ECE program.
- Children's developmental trajectories were improved from what they would have been without participating in the scholarship program and attending a high-quality ECE program (i.e., children moved closer to age-expected performance).
 - Specifically, children's scores on the measure of language (receptive vocabulary) showed a significant increase of 5 points after one year of participation in a high-quality ECE program.
 - The gain of 5 points after one year of participation in a high-quality ECE Program is equivalent to an effect size of .33, which statisticians consider to be a moderate and important effect size.
- Children also showed significant improvements in social skills between baseline and one year later.
- There were no significant changes on average after one year for scores on behavior problems (i.e., anger-aggression) or attention and task persistence.
- In addition to these assessment findings, a larger percentage of children passed the English screener at the one-year follow-up assessment compared with baseline. This result indicates improvements in English proficiency for children who are English language learners.

What are the next steps?

SRI will continue to collect data on children and their families in 2011 when the final cohort of children enter kindergarten.

