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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA.



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# Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Evaluation

## Annual Report

SRI Project 18280

Submitted to  
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## Executive Summary



This is the first annual report on the evaluation of the pilot of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program. It covers the period from January to December 2008, the first full year of starting up the program. Activities during the year included the following:

- Enrolling the first cohorts of children and families into the scholarship program and the evaluation
- Getting eligible children enrolled in and starting to participate in Parent Aware-rated early education programs
- Beginning to follow the participation of scholarship children and their families over time through evaluation activities
- Tracking implementation of Parent Aware and the supply of early education program slots in districts 6 and 7 in Saint Paul
- Monitoring the implementation of the scholarship program (e.g., procedures, successes, challenges).

The report begins with an overview of the scholarship model and of the intended start-up planning. Next, we present Year 1 findings about the participating children and families, about early education programs and the pilot community, and about the implementation activities, successes, challenges, and modifications made to address the challenges. The report ends with a summary and the next steps in the evaluation.

The qualitative and quantitative data presented in this report address key questions about the scholarship program's logic model.

- How have the three scholarship program interventions begun to be implemented [i.e., parent mentoring, receipt of scholarship funds and attendance in high-quality early childhood education (ECE) programs, and participation in the Parent Aware program rating system]?
- How is the market forces component of the scholarship logic model working so far?

The table below shows the number of participants in the scholarship program; in-depth outcome evaluation data are being collected for Cohorts 2 and 3 only.

Number of Participants in Scholarship Program, by Cohort

	Definition of Group	Projected No.	Actual No.	No. with Consent	No. Enrolled in ECE Program*
Cohort 1	Early enrollee group; expected to receive about 6-18 months of ECE program participation starting 1/1/08	100	101	81	71
Cohort 2**	Eligible to receive scholarship from 9/1/08 for 2 years, enter kindergarten in 2010	300	150	110	106
Cohort 3**	Eligible to receive scholarship from 9/1/09 for 2 years, enter kindergarten in 2011	300	88	44	---
Infant Cohort 1	Receiving parent mentoring, expected to enter ECE programs in fall 2010, receive scholarship for 1 year	200	89	52	---
Infant Cohort 2	Receiving parent mentoring, eligible to enter ECE programs in fall 2011, no scholarship funds allocated	200	94	42	---
Total		1,100	522	329	177

\* Enrolled in ECE program by fall 2008.

\*\* These are the children expected to be included in the outcome evaluation.

For Cohort 2:

- Most of the children who were eligible and began participating in the scholarship evaluation (96%) were continuing to participate as of December 2008.
- Many children are English language learners. A little over half of the families reported that their primary home language was English (58%), with Hmong (13%) and Karen (12%) being the next most common home languages.
- Many children are from diverse families. Ethnicity was not reported on the application forms for one-fourth of the families (25%), but for those reporting the majority of the families were African-American (33%) or Asian (24%).
- About three-fourths of Cohort 2 (72%) had household incomes below 100% of Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG); the remainder are between 100 and 185% FPG.

Cohort 2 families were assigned to one of five different Parent Mentoring agencies participating in the scholarship program (Figure 1). The five agencies were serving a similar number and percentage of the families. The children in Cohort 2 who had enrolled in an ECE program by December 2008 ( $N = 81$ ) were attending a variety of types of programs (Figure 2).

- No children were using their scholarship funds to attend a family-based child care program.

Figure 1. Family Participation in Parent Mentoring, by Parent Mentor Agency, Cohort 2, Families with Signed Consent Only (N = 110)

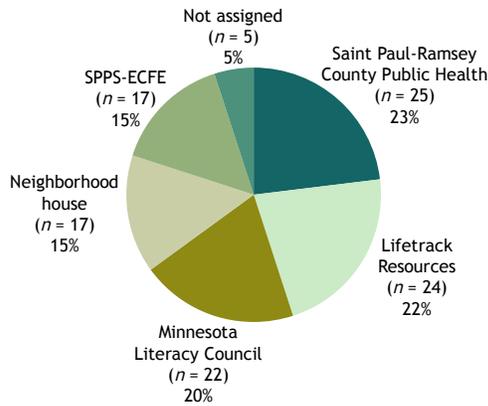
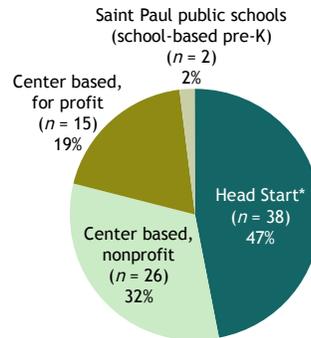


Figure 2. Type of Early Childhood Education Program in Which Participating Children Use Their Scholarship Funds, Cohort 2, Families with Signed Consent Only, Child Enrolled in ECE Program by December 2008 (N=81)



\* Three different Head Start sites.

Note: Does not include the 29 children in Cohort 2 who had not enrolled in a program by December 2008.

- About two-thirds (63%) of the children were using their scholarship funds to attend an ECE program full-time.
- Detailed information about the number of ECE programs and slots in and near districts 6 and 7 in Saint Paul are included in the report.

The major conclusions and recommendations from qualitative data collected during 2008 include the following:

- 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 to develop, clarify, and disseminate procedures and information about the scholarship program, were undertaken.
- By mid-year, participating staff suggested that 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 identify and monitor supply of available slots regularly.

Due to a significant reduction in the number of children projected to enroll in the scholarship program, SRI International revised the evaluation design in January 2009. These changes and their impetus are described in the annual report.



## Introduction



This is the first annual report on the evaluation of the pilot of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program. It covers the period from January to December 2008, the first full year of starting up the program. Activities during the year included the following:

- Enrolling the first cohorts of children and families into the scholarship program and the evaluation
- Getting eligible children enrolled in and starting to participate in Parent Aware-rated early education programs
- Beginning to follow the participation of scholarship children and their families over time through evaluation activities
- Tracking implementation of Parent Aware and the supply of early education program slots in districts 6 and 7 in Saint Paul
- Monitoring the implementation of the scholarship program (e.g., procedures, successes, challenges).

The purpose of this annual report is to describe how the scholarship model is being implemented and what has been learned thus far about its effects on children, families, early education programs, and the targeted community (the targeted pilot areas in Saint Paul, Minnesota). Thus, the report has both process and outcome components.

The report begins with an overview of the scholarship model and of the intended start-up planning. Next, we present Year 1 findings about the participating children and families, about early education programs and the pilot community, and about the implementation activities, successes, challenges, and modifications made to address the challenges. The report ends with a summary and next steps in the evaluation.

## Overview of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Model and Planning Activities



### *Model Description*

The purpose of this evaluation is to test the effectiveness of a market-oriented early childhood scholarship model outlined by Rolnick and Grunewald.<sup>1</sup> This model, which views early childhood education as a wise investment in economic development terms, builds on the ever-growing early childhood research literature demonstrating the short- and long-term benefits of high-quality early education programs, particularly for children from low-income families (who often lack access to high-quality early education programs).

The developers (Rolnick and Grunewald) and individuals representing MELF were asked about the impetus for the pilot of the scholarship program and their vision of it addressing early childhood education issues. These respondents articulated key features of the model, including the following:

- The model rests on the assumption that in a market-driven system, people behave in their best interests (i.e., parents are invested in the best interests of their children; the child care workforce and early education program administrators want to make a living).
- In designing the scholarship model, the developers kept in mind three guiding principles:
  - Provision of financial resources to families. Parents from low-income families must be given the financial resources that will enable them to access high-quality early childhood education (ECE) programs for their children; if incentives to programs are increased, the market will respond.
  - Increased accountability. Early education programs must be held accountable for producing positive results (e.g., getting children ready to be successful in school); programs that produce positive results will be eligible to receive higher payments, in the form of scholarships, for the children they serve, thus incentivizing ongoing performance. If programs are provided with incentives to produce positive results, they will respond to produce positive results.
  - Parent empowerment. Low-income parents must be given information that can help them make good choices about how best to support their children's

<sup>1</sup> Rolnick, A., & Grunewald, R. (2003, December). Early childhood development: Economic development with a high public return. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, *The Region (Supplement)*, 17(4), 6-12.  
Grunewald R., & Rolnick, A. (2006). *A proposal for achieving high returns on early childhood development*. Minneapolis, MN: Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Available at <http://www.minneapolisfed.org/pubs/cd/07-4/melf.cfm>.

early learning and school readiness. If parents are given the information about the characteristics and benefits of high-quality ECE programs for their children's learning and school readiness and the monetary resources needed to access these programs, their empowerment will create demand, which in turn will promote long-term sustainability of the supply of high-quality early education programs.

In short, the model contends that the market must provide incentives for early childhood education programs to achieve high quality, programs must be accountable to parents and the public (who fund programs) for achieving positive child outcomes, and parent empowerment is predicted to drive demand for high-quality early education programs as well as promote sustainability. An additional principle is that the model should be cost-effective at a systems level; that is, the market will support those programs that achieve positive results, but those programs that do not will not be sustained or at the very least will not participate in a market-driven approach (i.e., not solicit scholarship funds because they do not meet high quality standards).

Figure 1 shows the logic model of the scholarship program from its developers. The model has three major interventions, shown as Program Inputs, that map on to the three principles described above.

- Parent Mentoring through home visiting to provide parents with information about the characteristics and benefits of high-quality ECE programs
  - Mentoring leads to parent empowerment – Low-income parents are given information that can help them make good choices about how best to support their children's early learning and school readiness.
- Scholarships for low-income families to use to pay for high-quality ECE programs for their preschool children
  - Scholarships lead to access to markets – Low-income families are given the financial resources to enable them to access high-quality ECE programs for their children.
  - If incentives to programs are increased, the market will respond (i.e., with increases in program supply and quality).
- Implementation of an ECE program quality rating system, Parent Aware,<sup>2</sup> to rate and monitor ECE program quality
  - A rating system leads to increased accountability – ECE programs are accountable for producing positive results (e.g., get children ready to be successful in school).

The findings to be presented draw on this logic model to show how the scholarship model is working and what has been learned about its components. The qualitative and quantitative data presented in this report address key questions about the logic model.

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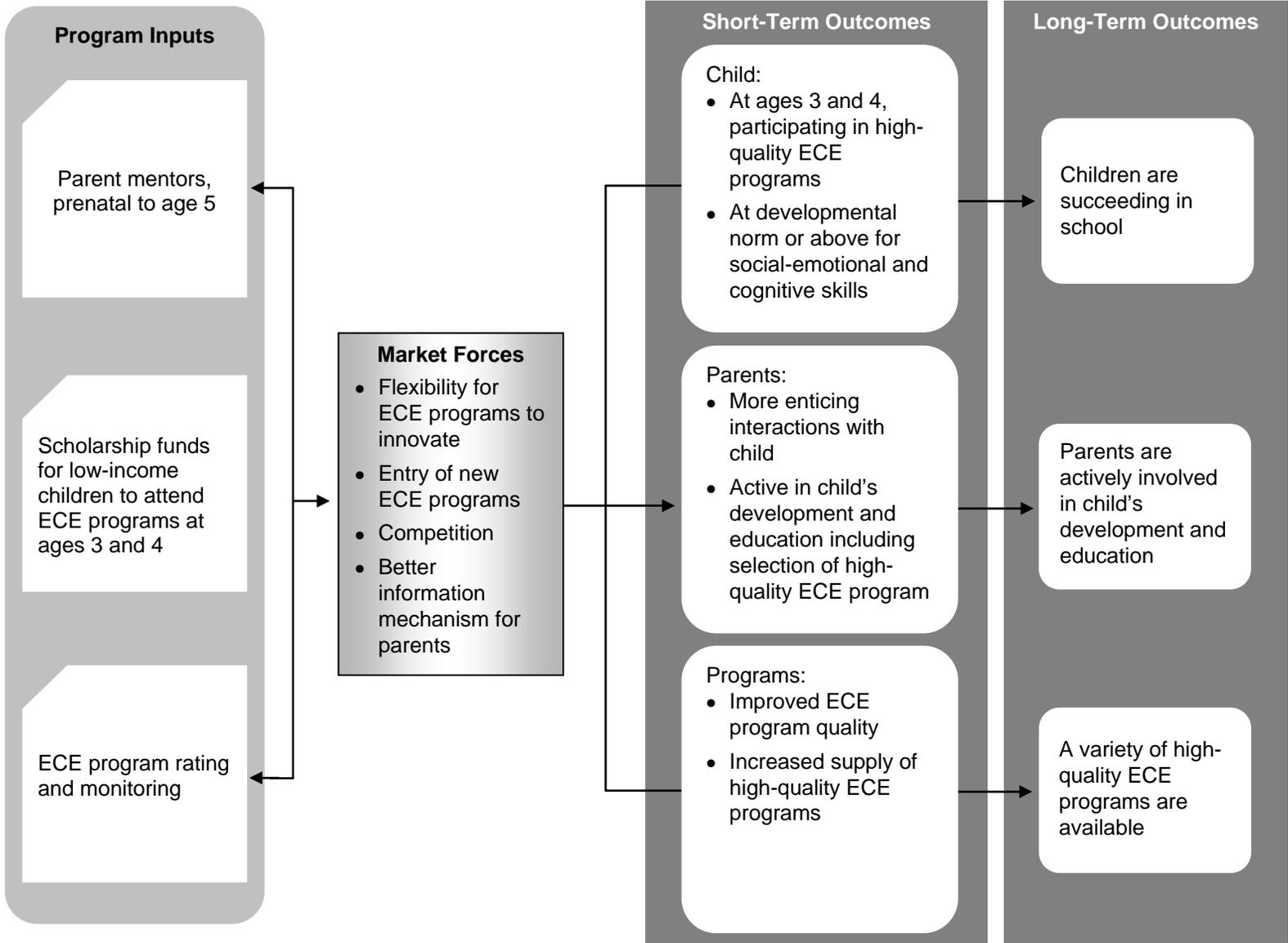
<sup>2</sup> For detailed information about Parent Aware, go to its web site: <http://www.parentawareratings.org/>

- How have the three scholarship program interventions shown as Program Inputs begun to be implemented (i.e., parent mentoring, receipt of scholarship funds and attendance in high-quality ECE programs, and participation in the Parent Aware program rating system)?<sup>3</sup>
  - How many families have been applying for the scholarship funds, and what are their characteristics?
  - Who is participating in the home visiting, and how many visits are families receiving?
  - Which programs are children with scholarship funds attending?
  - What was the supply of ECE programs in the pilot area (districts 6 and 7 in Saint Paul) early in 2008, and how many programs had been rated by Parent Aware by the end of 2008?
- How is the market forces component of the scholarship logic model working so far?
  - How many high-quality ECE programs and slots are available in and near the pilot area for families to choose for their children to use their scholarship funds?
  - How has the supply of ECE programs and slots changed over the first year of implementation? Have new programs entered the market in and near the pilot area?
  - Which types of ECE programs are responding to the scholarship program by participating in Parent Aware and by enrolling children with scholarship funds?
  - How are scholarship-eligible families choosing ECE programs for their children? Are parents using Parent Aware to inform their decision-making in selecting an ECE program for their child?

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<sup>3</sup> These questions also provide initial data on the Short-Term Outcomes components of the logic model (e.g., children participating in high-quality programs, improved program quality, and increased supply of high-quality programs).

Figure 1. Logic Model of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program  
 Goal: Children from Low-Income Families Are Prepared to Succeed in School



ECE = Early Childhood Education

## *Start-up and Planning Activities in 2007*

Initial planning and implementation activities to launch the scholarship program began in 2007.

- In early 2007, an implementation team began to develop the *Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Pilot Manual*, which describes the policies and procedures of implementation. The working procedural manual was planned to be a work in progress, to be revised to reflect changes in policies and procedures as needed, based on actual implementation successes and challenges. The most recent version is appended.
- Early education program providers began attending orientation meetings and enrolling in Parent Aware in the summer and fall.
- The Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF) began fundraising for the scholarship pilot program.
- High-quality programs were defined in the scholarship program pilot manual as those that have a Parent Aware rating of 3 or 4 or receive a provisional rating by either the Minnesota Department of Education or the Minnesota Department of Human Services (e.g., Head Start programs, school-based school readiness programs).
- Projections were made of how many children would receive scholarships and the duration of the pilot project. The decision was that the goal of the scholarship program would be to provide Parent Mentoring and/or scholarships for approximately 1,100 children from low-income families by 2011,<sup>4</sup> 700 of whom would receive scholarships to enroll in high-quality early education programs by fall 2009. The plan entailed the following steps:
  - Recruiting 100 children who would be eligible beginning September 1, 2007, and would enroll in high-quality early education programs from January 2008 to August 2009 (Cohort 1).
  - Recruiting 300 children who would be eligible beginning September 1, 2008, and would enroll in high-quality early education programs from September 2008 to August 2010 (Cohort 2).
  - Recruiting 300 children who would be eligible beginning September 1, 2009, and would enroll in high-quality early education programs from September 2009 to August 2011 (Cohort 3).
  - Recruiting two cohorts of 200 infants each in 2008. Infant Cohort 1 was promised a 1-year scholarship at 3 years of age and parent mentoring. Infant Cohort 2, a younger/prenatal cohort, was not promised a scholarship at 3 years of age but would receive home visiting through the Parent Mentor agencies. Infant Cohort 1 will be 3 years old in 2010.

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<sup>4</sup> This decision is described in the *Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Pilot Manual* dated July 18, 2008, page 3.

- Parent Mentor agencies were selected in fall 2007.
  - Parent Mentor agencies are expected to provide both foundational home visiting (i.e., services that promote school readiness and access to community resources including preventive health checkups and screenings, education about early literacy, and resource assistance for families to meet basic needs) and the “add-on” module, Selecting Quality Early Education and Care Module.
  - The number of visits was intended to vary depending on the child’s age and the family’s needs.
  - A training workshop was held in December 2007 for parent mentors on how to provide the add-on module.
- SRI International developed the evaluation plan for the scholarship pilot program, collaborating closely with colleagues from the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) at the University of Minnesota.
  - The final approved evaluation design included both a formative (process) evaluation and a summative (outcome) evaluation to test the market-based component of the logic model.
  - The design contains methods to examine the implementation of all aspects of the scholarship model, but the outcome evaluation was planned to include those children in Cohorts 2 and 3 who would attend 2 years of a high-quality ECE program and enter kindergarten in either 2010 or 2011 (before MELF sunsets in December 2011).

## Year 1 Findings: Children and Families



### *Number of Participants in Scholarship Program*

The children and families participating in the scholarship program are in five distinct cohorts (Table 1). In the evaluation, data are being collected on the numbers of participants and a few characteristics of the children and families in all five cohorts, but the in-depth outcome evaluation data are being collected for Cohorts 2 and 3 only.

Table 1. Number of Participants in Scholarship Program, by Cohort

	Definition of Group	Projected No.	Actual No.	No. with Consent	No. Enrolled in ECE Program*
Cohort 1	Early enrollee group; expected to receive about 6-18 months of ECE program participation starting 1/1/08	100	101	81	71
Cohort 2**	Eligible to receive scholarship from 9/1/08 for 2 years, enter kindergarten in 2010	300	150	110	106
Cohort 3**	Eligible to receive scholarship from 9/1/09 for 2 years, enter kindergarten in 2011	300	88	44	---
Infant Cohort 1	Receiving parent mentoring, expected to enter ECE programs in fall 2010, receive scholarship for 1 year	200	89	52	---
Infant Cohort 2	Receiving parent mentoring, eligible to enter ECE programs in fall 2011, no scholarship funds allocated	200	94	42	---
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,100</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>177</b>

\* Enrolled in ECE program by fall 2008.

\*\* These are the children expected to be included in the outcome evaluation.

- As of December 2008, 251 children met the eligibility requirements to receive scholarships in 2008 (Cohorts 1 and 2).
  - Cohort 1: 101 children were eligible for a scholarship to enroll in programs beginning January 1, 2008. These children are considered the ramp-up cohort and will have received between 6 and 18 months of high-quality ECE program exposure depending on when the family found a program to enroll their children in and when the children could enroll. As of December 2008,

71 of these children were enrolled in Parent Aware-rated ECE programs using their scholarship funds. Detailed outcome data will not be collected for this cohort of children.

- Cohort 2: 150 children were determined to be eligible for a scholarship to enroll in programs beginning September 1, 2008. These children are considered the first group to receive the maximum scholarship to enable them to attend 2 full years of a high-quality ECE program before entering kindergarten in 2010. As of December 2008, 106 of these children were enrolled in a Parent Aware-rated ECE program using their scholarship funds. Detailed outcome data are being collected for this cohort of children beginning in fall 2008.
- Another 271 children met eligibility requirements.
  - Cohort 3 children will not be eligible to enroll in an ECE program using their scholarship funds until September 1, 2009; they also will receive the maximum scholarship and ECE program attendance (i.e., 2 years) and are expected to enter kindergarten in fall 2011. As of December 2008, 88 children were in this group and signed up to receive scholarship funds in the fall of 2009. Detailed outcome data will be collected for this cohort of children beginning in fall 2009.
  - A total of 183 infants had approved applications to receive parent mentoring and scholarships [eligible to enroll in ECE programs in 2010 ( $N = 89$ ) Infant Cohort 1 or 2011 ( $N = 94$ ) Infant Cohort 2].

In the rest of this report, data are presented for Cohort 2 only because this is the group that can participate in the outcome evaluation and that is expected to have the most in-depth data, including school readiness and kindergarten outcomes, by 2011.

Figure 2 shows the number and status of the children in Cohort 2. These children were defined as participating in the evaluation if their parents had signed informed consent. Participation data as of December 2008 were as follows:

- 156 applications for scholarship funds were approved during 2008.<sup>5</sup>
- Of the 156 eligible,
  - 6 families' (5%) applications were closed or withdrawn.
  - 110 families (70%) had signed consent to participate in the evaluation.
  - 40 families (25%) did not have signed consent to participate in the evaluation, but 28 of these children (70%) were enrolled in an ECE program.
    - o 17 (42%) of these families, had not been assigned to a parent mentor.
    - o Three (7%) of the parents in these families declined to participate in the evaluation.

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<sup>5</sup> Data are provided in monthly reports from Resources for Child Caring (RCC).

- Of the 110 eligible families with signed consent to participate in the evaluation, 81 of the children (74%) were enrolled in an ECE program and 29 (26%) were not.

Figure 2 also shows the status of data collection begun in fall 2008 for the outcome evaluation (child assessments and parent phone interviews).

- A total of 106 parent phone interviews were attempted, and 54 of them were completed (51%).<sup>6</sup>
- Of the 81 children in cohort 2 enrolled in an ECE program by December 2008, child assessment data were collected for 59 (73%), or 54% of the total of 110 with signed consent.
  - Child assessors were able to attempt to conduct child assessments for a total of only 68 of this group of 81 children (84%).
    - o 11 of the 81 were enrolled in their ECE program late in the fall and were not included in attempts to collect the child assessments.
    - o 2 of the 81 were not assessed because they were enrolled in an early childhood special education classroom.
  - Of the 68 child assessments attempted,
    - o 7 children were not present in the ECE program on the days the assessor visited.
    - o 2 children were not willing to participate in the child assessments (i.e., the children refused).

The number of children and families in Cohort 2 who participated in this first wave of outcome data collection was far lower than needed for the original evaluation design plan (i.e., an anticipated 300). Additional follow-up will be needed in early 2009 to better understand how this shortfall in participation will affect the evaluation. The data show, for instance, that

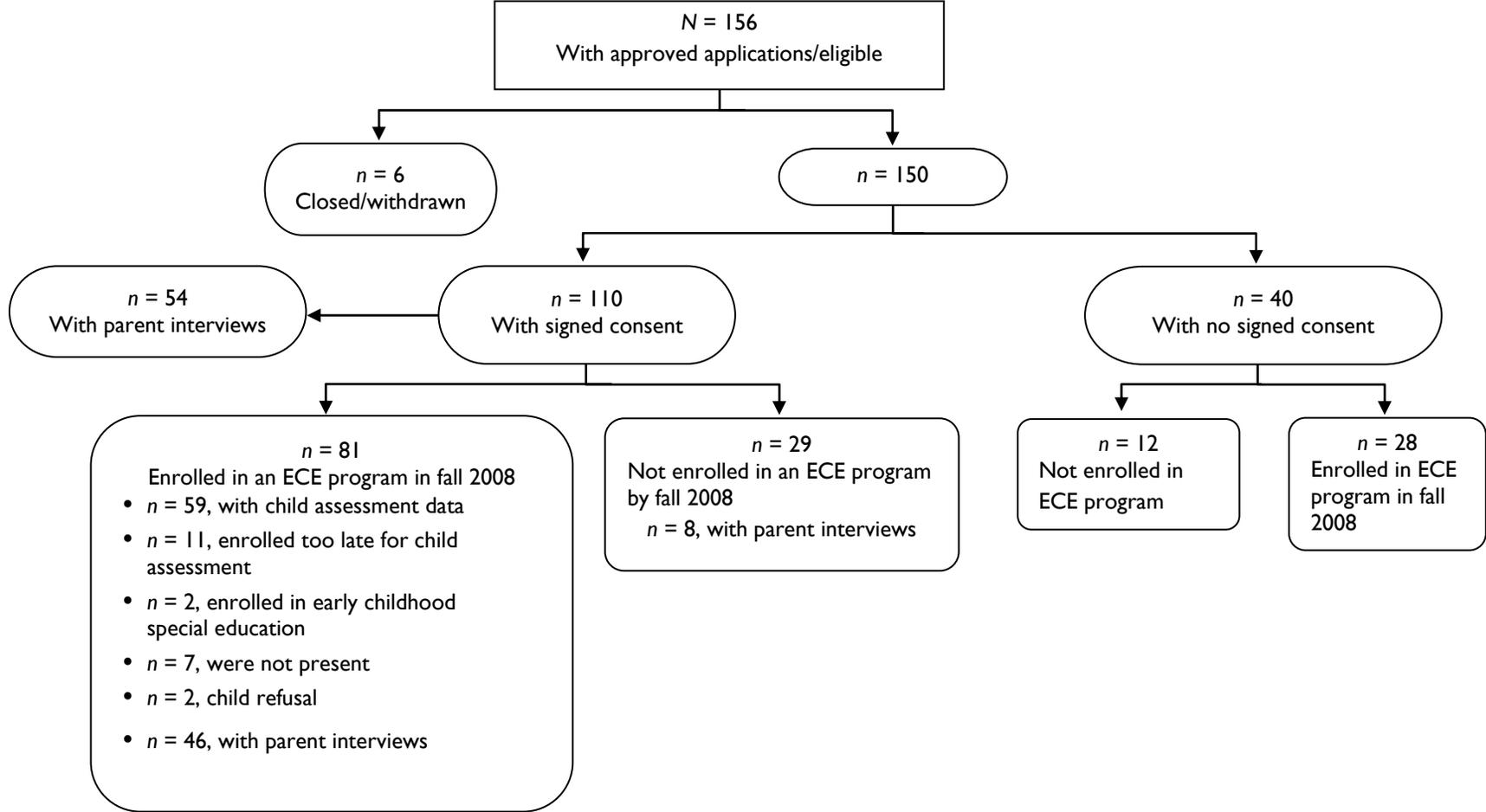
- The total number of eligible children in Cohort 2 who were enrolled in an ECE program by December 2008 was 109, which is 36% of the projected enrollment of 300.
  - About one-fourth of these children (28, 26%) do not have signed consent to participate in the evaluation, but follow-up in early 2009 may lead to obtaining signed consent and participation in the evaluation by more families in this group.
- Of the 110 families with signed consent to participate in the evaluation, for almost one-third (29, 26%) the children were not enrolled in an ECE program. Additional follow-up will attempt to uncover why this is the case and provide families needed assistance to enroll the children in an ECE program, if they choose.

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<sup>6</sup> SRI will attempt to reach and interview the rest of the sample in Spring 2009.

- Of the 40 families without signed consent to participate in the evaluation, about one-third (12, 30%) are not enrolled in an ECE program. Additional follow-up will be attempted to determine their interest in participating in both the scholarship program and the evaluation.

Figure 2. Number of Children in Cohort 2 Participating in the Scholarship Program and Evaluation

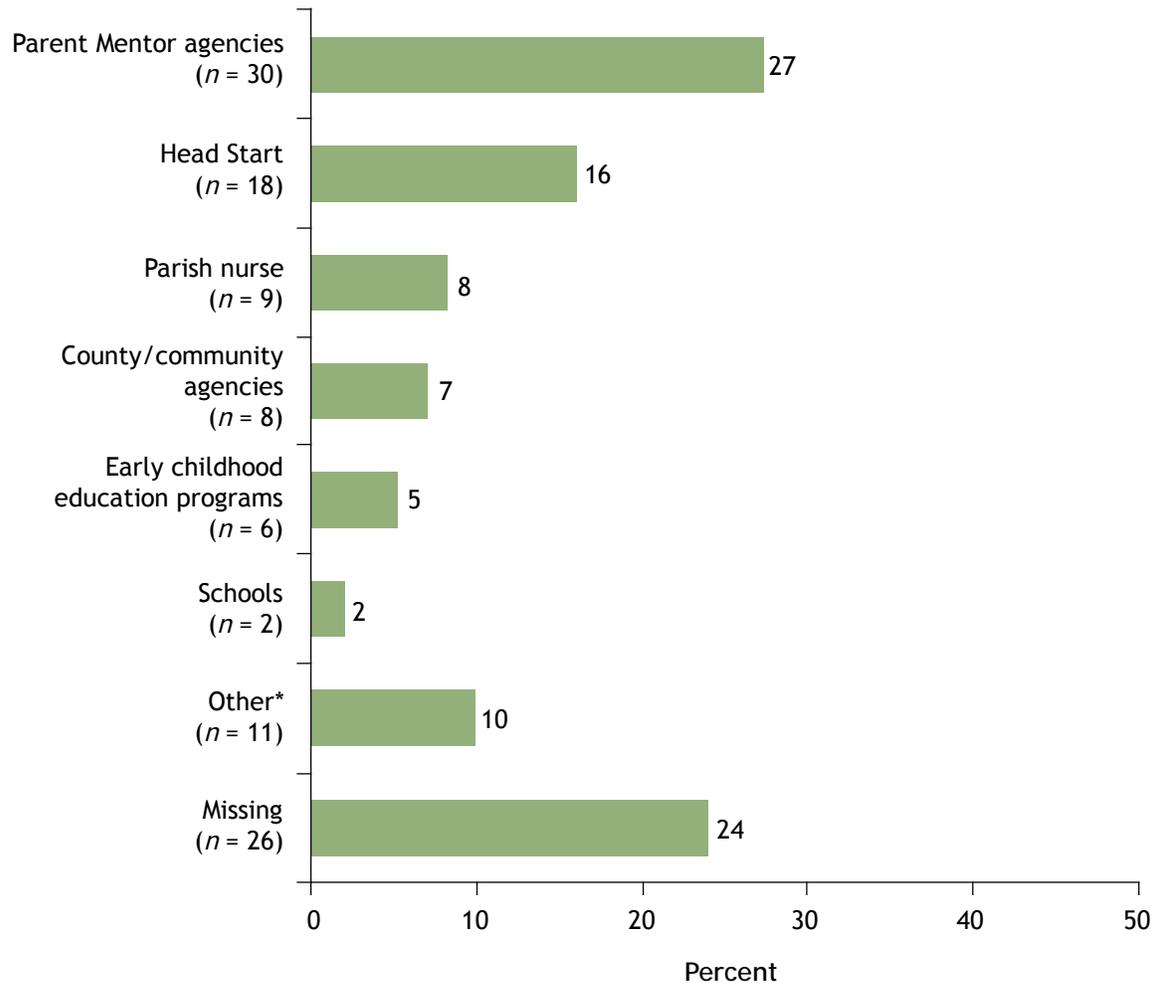


### *Characteristics of Children and Families in Cohort 2*

Data from the application forms for the children in Cohort 2 indicate that families learned about or were referred to the scholarship program from a variety of sources (Figure 3).

- Half of the families (50%) reported that they learned about the scholarship program from entities that receive payment from the scholarship program [the Parent Mentor agencies (27%), Head Start (16%), schools (2%), and other early childhood education programs (5%)].
- About one-fifth of the families (17%) learned about the scholarship program from community agencies (7%) or other community sources, including Resources for Child Caring (the local child care referral agency), word of mouth, mailings from the mayor's office, or newspaper ads and other community advertisements (10%).
- For about one-fourth of the families (24%), the referral service was not reported on the application.

Figure 3. Sources of Referrals to the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program, Families with Signed Consent Only ( $N = 110$ )



\* includes RCC, word of mouth, mailings from the mayor's office, newspaper ads, and other community advertisements.

Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of children and families enrolled in the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program for Cohort 2, as well as their participation status as of December 2008. These preliminary data show the following:

- Most of the children who were eligible and began participating in the scholarship evaluation (96%) were continuing to participate.
  - Very few families (6, 4%) who began to complete an application or completed an application and were found to be eligible for a scholarship discontinued participation because of the family's mobility and/or incomplete paperwork.

- A little over half of the families reported that their primary home language was English (58%), with Hmong (13%) and Karen (12%) being the next most common home languages.
- Ethnicity was not reported on the application forms for one-fourth of the families (25%), but for those reporting the majority of the families were African-American (33%) or Asian (24%).
- About three-fourths of Cohort 2 (72%) had household incomes below 100% FPG.

Other data from the application forms indicated that:

- Families in Cohort 2 reported an average of five individuals living in their households.
- Across all cohorts, about half the families (56%) have one child participating in the scholarship program, one-third (34%) have two children participating, and about 10% have three or more children participating.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Children and Families Enrolled in the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program, Cohort 2

	No. with Consent	No. without Consent	Total	
Status as of December 2008 ( <i>N</i> = 156)			<i>N</i>	%
Total eligible	110	46	156	100
Participating	106	44	150	96
Closed*	4	1	5	3
Withdrawn*	0	1	1	1
Primary home language ( <i>N</i> = 156)				
English	66	25	91	58
Spanish	5	2	7	4
Hmong	14	7	21	13
Somali	3	1	4	3
Karen	11	7	19	12
Other	7	1	8	5
Missing	4	3	7	4
Ethnicity ( <i>N</i> = 156)				
African-American	40	11	51	33
Asian	28	10	38	24
Latino	7	2	9	6
White	6	2	8	5
Other	9	2	11	7
Missing	20	19	39	25
Gender ( <i>N</i> = 156)				
Male	54	23	77	49
Female	56	23	79	51
Household Income ( <i>N</i> = 156)				
100-185% FPG**	28	12	40	26
<100% FPG*	81	31	112	72
Missing†	1	3	4	2

Source: Application form.

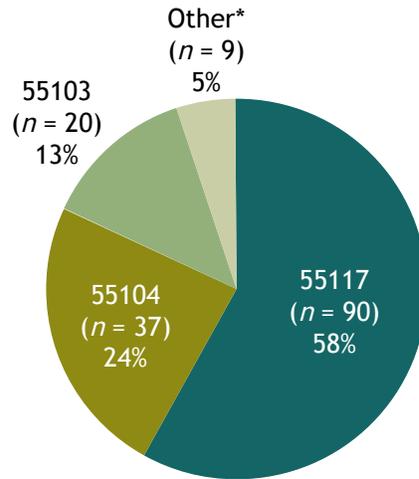
\* Closed = RCC closed the file, Withdrawn = Family dropped out of program or closed its file for some reason.

\*\* FPG = Federal Poverty Guidelines.

† Not on file in database yet.

The majority of the families of the children in Cohort 2 reside in three zip codes in districts 6 and 7 in Saint Paul (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Home Zip Code for Families of Children Participating in the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program, Cohort 2 ( $N = 156$ )



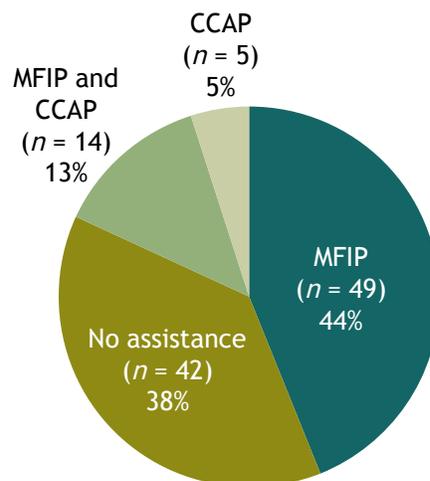
Note: This figure included the six families that had withdrawn or had their files closed by December 2008.

\* includes 55106, 55113, 55118, 55119, and 55130.

Many of the families in Cohort 2 were receiving one or two forms of public assistance (Figure 5).

- About two-thirds of families (62%) were receiving financial assistance from either the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), or from both programs.
  - About half of the families (57%) were receiving financial assistance from the MFIP (MFIP and MFIP plus CCAP).
  - About one-fifth (18%) were receiving assistance from CCAP (CCAP and MFIP plus CCAP).
  - 13% of the families were receiving assistance from both assistance programs (MFIP and CCAP).

Figure 5. Families' Participation Rates in MFIP and CCAP Financial Assistance Programs, Cohort 2, Families with Signed Consent Only ( $N = 110$ )



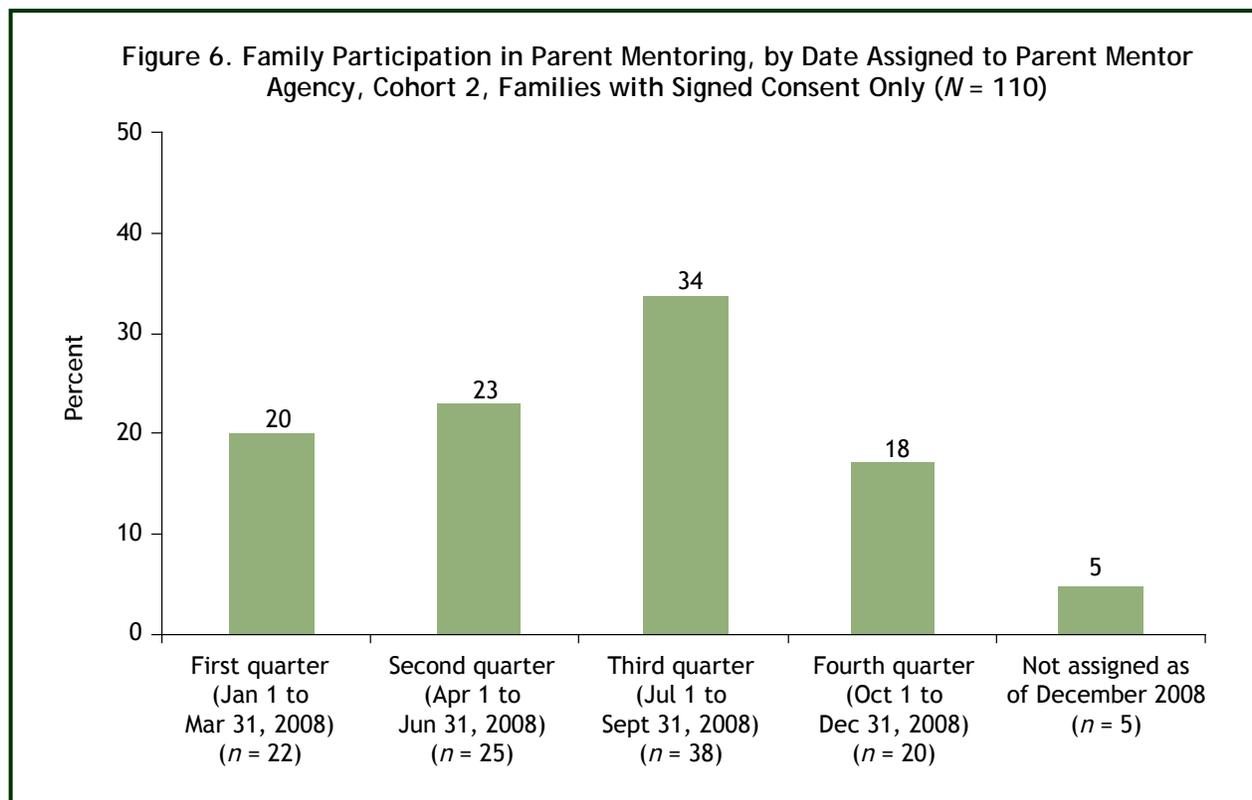
MFIP = Minnesota Family Investment Program  
CCAP = Child Care Assistance Program

### *Participation in Parent Mentoring of Families in Cohort 2*

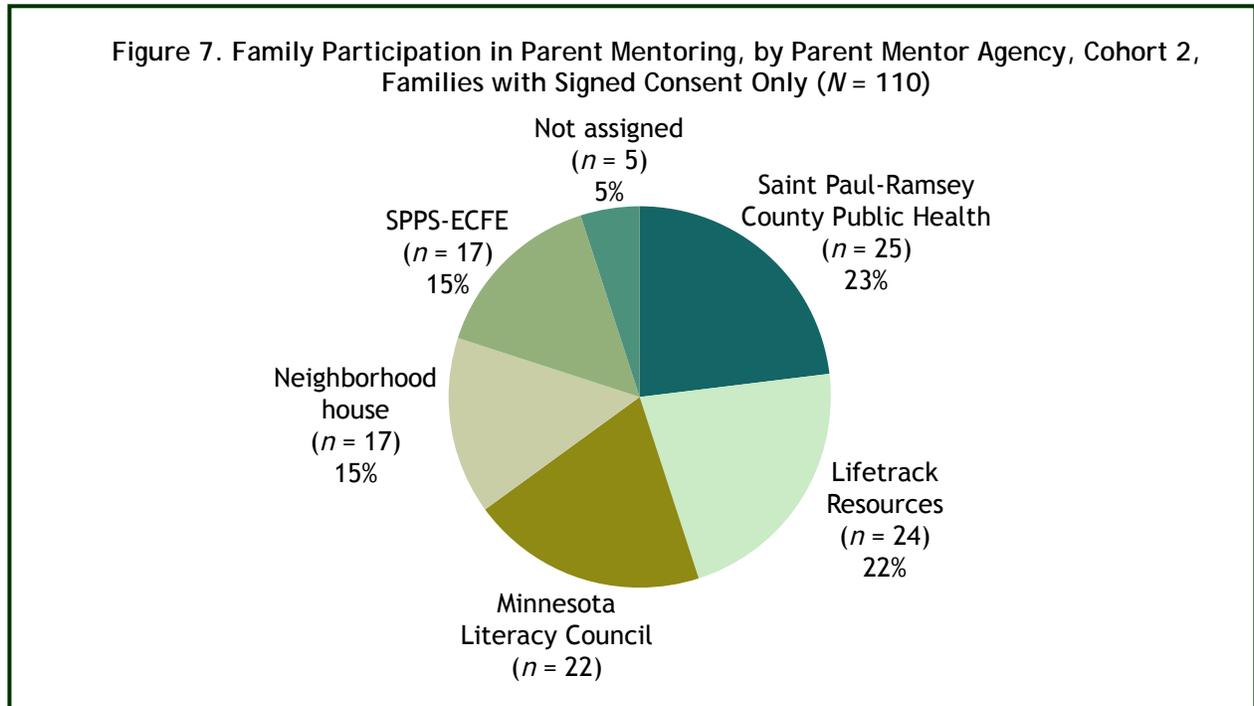
For the 110 families with signed consent, by December 2008 almost all (95%) had been assigned to one of the five Parent Mentoring agencies participating in the scholarship program (Figure 6).

- One-fifth of the families (20%) were assigned in the first quarter of 2008.
- One-fourth of families (23%) were assigned in the second quarter of 2008.
- About one-third of the families (34%) were assigned over the summer and early in the fall just as the new school year was starting.
- The remaining families (18%) were assigned to a Parent Mentoring agency in the last quarter of 2008.
- These data show over three-fourths of the children were assigned a parent mentor in time to select a program by fall 2008.

Future analyses will calculate the length of time, on average, it takes for families to be assigned a parent mentor agency from the date at which the application form is signed.



Cohort 2 families were assigned to one of five different Parent Mentoring agencies participating in the scholarship program (Figure 7). The five agencies were serving a similar number and percentage of the families.



Parent Mentors are requested to complete a form for each home visit they make to participating families. SRI processes and analyzes the forms. Preliminary data for the children and families in Cohort 2 with signed consent to participate in the evaluation indicate the following:

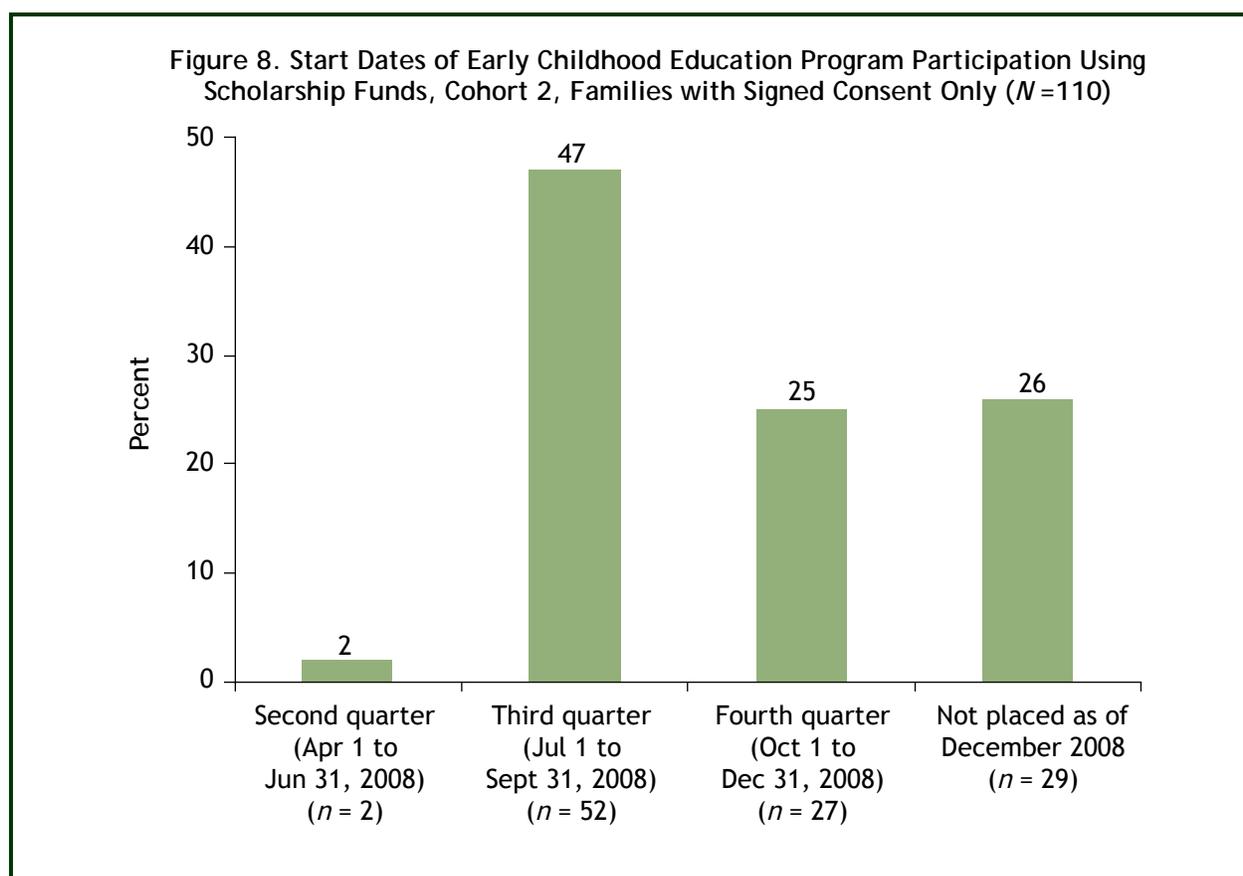
- Forms were completed for 40 families.<sup>7</sup>
- Home visits were conducted by all five parent mentor agencies.
- Across these 40 families, forms are available for 137 Parent Mentor home visits. From these forms, the data show that:
  - 20% of the families had one visit, 60% had two to four visits, and 20% more than four visits.
  - The average length of a visit was 49 minutes.
  - Across the 40 families, the average time across which the visits occurred was 22 weeks (from the date of the first visit through December 15, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> As of January 2009, SRI is still analyzing these forms. Staff must match names and dates of birth because an identification system was not in place for use on the parent mentor forms.

### Enrollment of Children in Cohort 2 in ECE Programs

Figure 8 shows when children began to attend ECE programs using their scholarship funds.

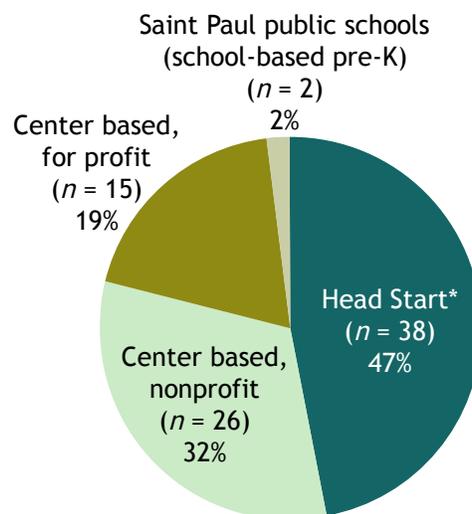
- By the end of 2008, about three-fourths of the 110 consented scholarship-eligible children in Cohort 2 (81, 74%) had enrolled in an ECE program.
  - Most children enrolled and began attending an ECE program in the second half of 2008, with about half (47%) starting in late summer to early fall.
  - Another one-fourth (27, 25%) enrolled and began attending an ECE program in the last 3 months of 2008.
- About one-fourth of scholarship-eligible children (29, 26%) had not begun to attend a program because the family could not find a program that met their needs, decided not to enroll the child at this time, or had some other reason for not enrolling the child at this time.



The children in Cohort 2 who had enrolled in an ECE program by December 2008 ( $N = 81$ ) were attending a variety of types of programs (Figure 9).

- About half the children (47%) were using their scholarship funds to attend a Head Start Program.
- About half the children (51%) were using their scholarship funds to attend a center-based ECE program.
  - About one-third of the children (32%) were using their scholarship to attend a center-based nonprofit ECE program.
  - About one-fifth of the children (19%) were using their scholarship to attend a center-based for-profit ECE program.
  - Only 2 children (2%) were using their scholarship funds to attend a public school-based ECE program.

Figure 9. Type of Early Childhood Education Program in Which Participating Children Use Their Scholarship Funds, Cohort 2, Families with Signed Consent Only, Child Enrolled in ECE Program by December 2008 ( $N = 81$ )



Note: Does not include the 29 children in Cohort 2 who had not enrolled in a program by December 2008.

\* Three different Head Start sites.

- 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, and the other one-third were attending part time using their scholarship funds.

Additional information about these ECE programs is provided in the next section.

## Year 1 Findings: Early Childhood Education Programs and the Community



In this section, we describe the availability of ECE programs in and near districts 6 and 7 in Saint Paul and participation in and ratings from the Parent Aware rating system. Early education providers could enroll in Parent Aware beginning in the summer and fall of 2007. (A separate evaluation of Parent Aware, funded by MELF, is being conducted by Child Trends.<sup>8</sup>) We present total supply of programs and slots in the pilot area, the number of slots available at a specific point in time, and how many high-quality programs and slots were available by the end of 2008. This information serves as a baseline to monitor changes in the supply over the next several years as the scholarship program continues to be implemented.

To describe the supply of ECE programs and slots in the pilot area, we display five maps of districts 6 and 7 and nearby areas that include four zip codes (55101, 55103, 55104, 55107). These zip codes were chosen to represent those that overlap in districts 6 and 7 defined throughout the report as in and near the pilot areas, those areas in which we would expect that (1) parents of children with scholarship funds would seek out ECE programs because of their proximity and (2) programs would want to participate in Parent Aware in order to be available to families with scholarship funds. The maps were developed with data from NACCRAware, Web-based information management software from the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies,<sup>9</sup> and from the Parent Aware web site.<sup>10</sup> The maps show the supply of programs and slots in and near the pilot area and the location of the programs that children are attending using their scholarship funds.

Figure 10 shows the total supply of licensed center-based ECE programs and slots as of May 2008 to serve as a baseline about total supply in and near the pilot area.<sup>11</sup> This supply information shows the following:

- A total of 2,696 slots existed in 38 licensed programs in and near the pilot area.
- The breakdown of the 38 programs was 30 community-based programs, 4 Head Start programs, and 4 school-based programs.
- For individual programs, the total slots ranged from 15 to 240, with a median of 60 slots.

<sup>8</sup> A Year 1 report about the Parent Aware evaluation is available on the MELF website at [www.melf.org](http://www.melf.org).

<sup>9</sup> Available at <http://www.naccrra.org/membership/naccrraware/>

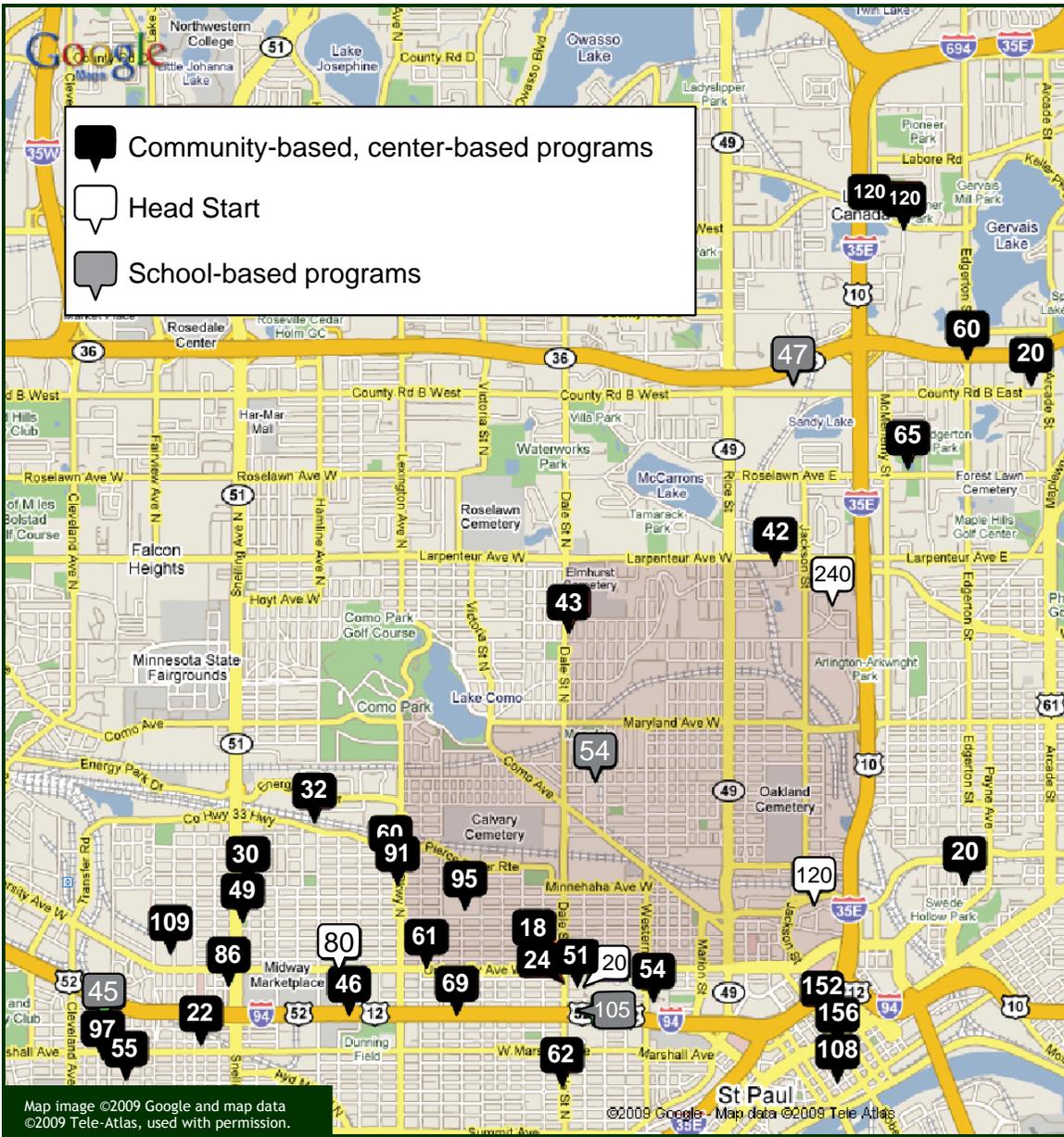
<sup>10</sup> Available at <http://www.parentawareratings.org/>

<sup>11</sup> These slots are located in programs that serve infants/toddlers, preschool-age children, and school-age children. Programs that served only school-age children were removed.

The total number of slots varied by the type of ECE program.

- The community-based, center-based programs had a total of 1,917 slots.
- The Head Start programs had a total of 560 slots.
- The school-based programs had a total of 219 slots.

Figure 10. Location of Licensed Center-Based ECE Programs in and Near Districts 6 and 7 and Total Slots, May 2008



Note: The number inside each marker is the total capacity of the program defined by the total number of children the program can care for according to its license. The total capacity across all included programs is 2,696 slots.

Figure 11 shows the available openings in licensed center-based programs in May 2008 to serve as a baseline of actual openings at a point in time in and near the pilot area.<sup>12</sup> This supply information shows the following:

- A total of 396 slots were open in the 38 licensed programs in and near the pilot area, with a median of 2 open slots.
- The range of open slots was from 0 to 55 for individual sites.
- Because Head Start and school-based programs enroll children in the fall and do not typically have open slots for the rest of the year, these programs had no open slots in May 2008.
- In May 2008, only 15% of all slots in and near the pilot area were actually open for children to enroll in center-based ECE programs.

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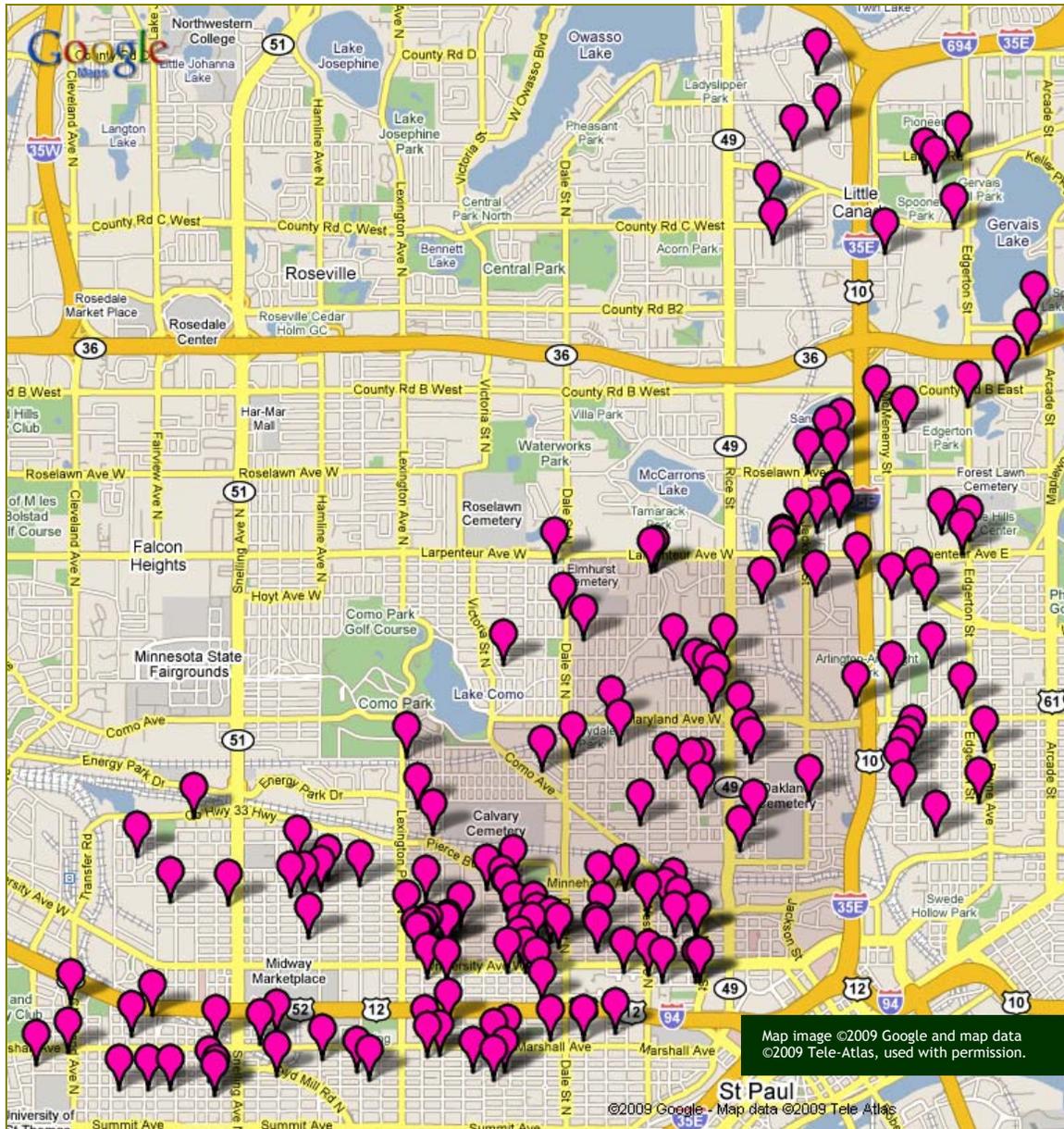
<sup>12</sup> These available slots are not disaggregated by the age of children. If open slots were listed for a particular program, it was not known whether they were for an infant, a three-year-old, or an afterschool program slot. For example, some school-based programs may have classrooms only for children who are 4 years old.



Figure 12 shows the location of licensed family-based child care programs and slots in May 2008 to serve as a baseline about total supply in and near the pilot area. As of May 2008,

- A total of 1,888 slots were in 172 licensed family-based child care programs in and near the pilot area, with a total of 368 open slots.
- For individual programs, total slots ranged from 6 to 14, with a median of 10 total slots.
- For individual programs, open slots ranged from 0 to 12, with a median of 1 open slot.
  - Thus, in May 2008, only 20% of all slots were actually open for children to enroll in the family-based child care programs.

Figure 12. Location of Licensed Family-Based Child Care Programs in and Near Districts 6 and 7, May 2008



Note: There were a total of 172 programs.

Figure 13 shows the Parent Aware-rated programs (as of December 2008). Displayed are all the rated programs and their ratings, including the high-quality programs in and near the pilot area. Although children can attend programs outside this area, this area was selected because we would expect that (1) parents of children with scholarship funds would seek out ECE programs because of their proximity and (2) programs would want to participate in Parent Aware in order to be available to families with scholarship funds. This information shows the following as of December 2008:

- A total of 27 programs had received Parent Aware ratings.
- A total of 23 programs (85%) received a rating of 3 or 4, indicating high quality.
  - The most common rating, for about half the programs (14, 52%), was a 3-star provisional rating.<sup>13</sup>
  - The three Head Start programs received an automatic 4-star rating.
- Only four programs (15%) received a rating of 1 or 2, indicating that they did not meet standards for a high-quality program; three of these were family-based child care programs.

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<sup>13</sup> Definitions of the 4-star rating categories are contained in a report about Parent Aware, available on the MELF website, [Parent Aware Year 1 Evaluation Report](#).

Figure 13. Location of Parent Aware-Rated ECE Center-Based Programs in and Near Districts 6 and 7 and Parent Aware Ratings, as of December 2008

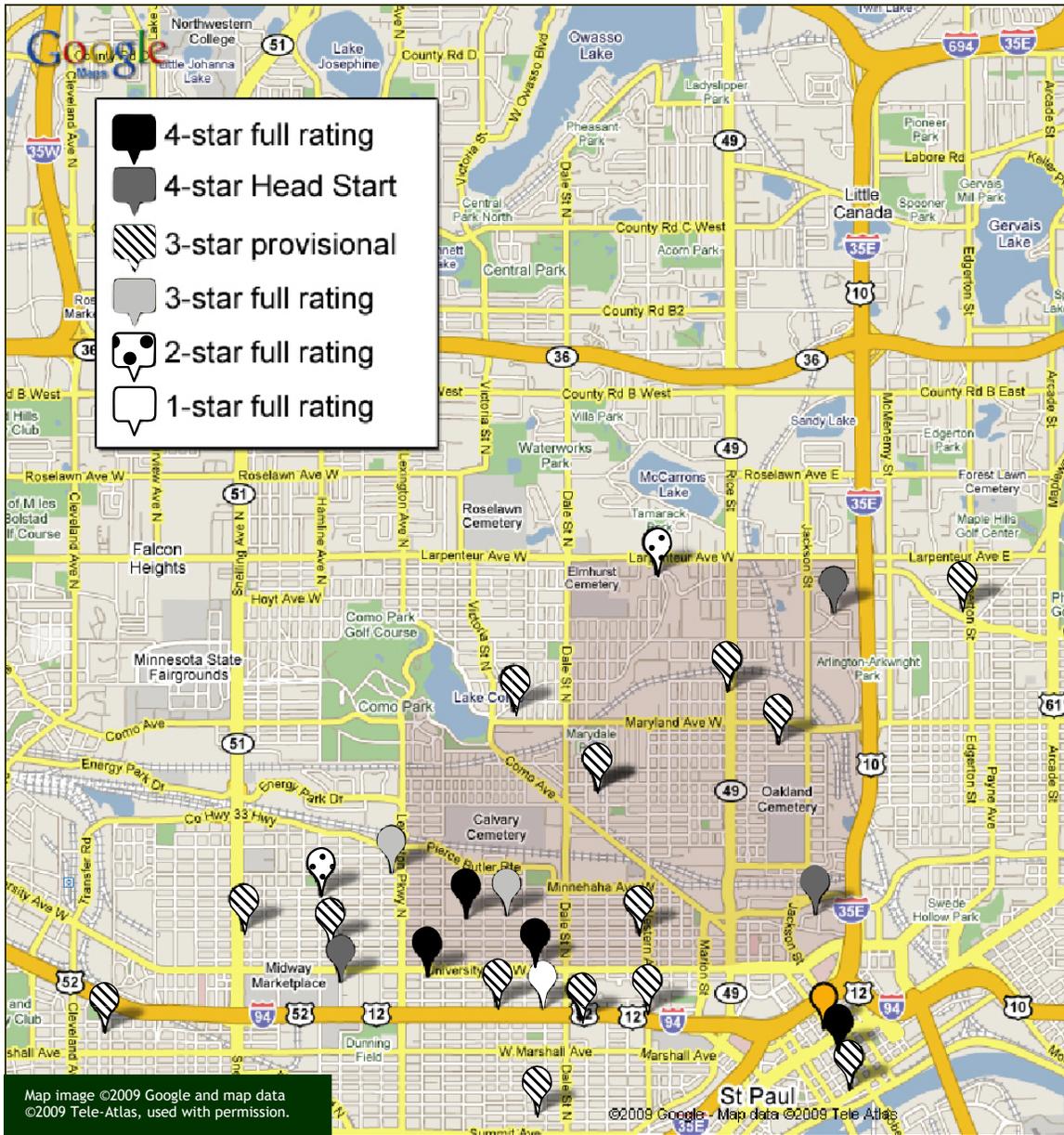
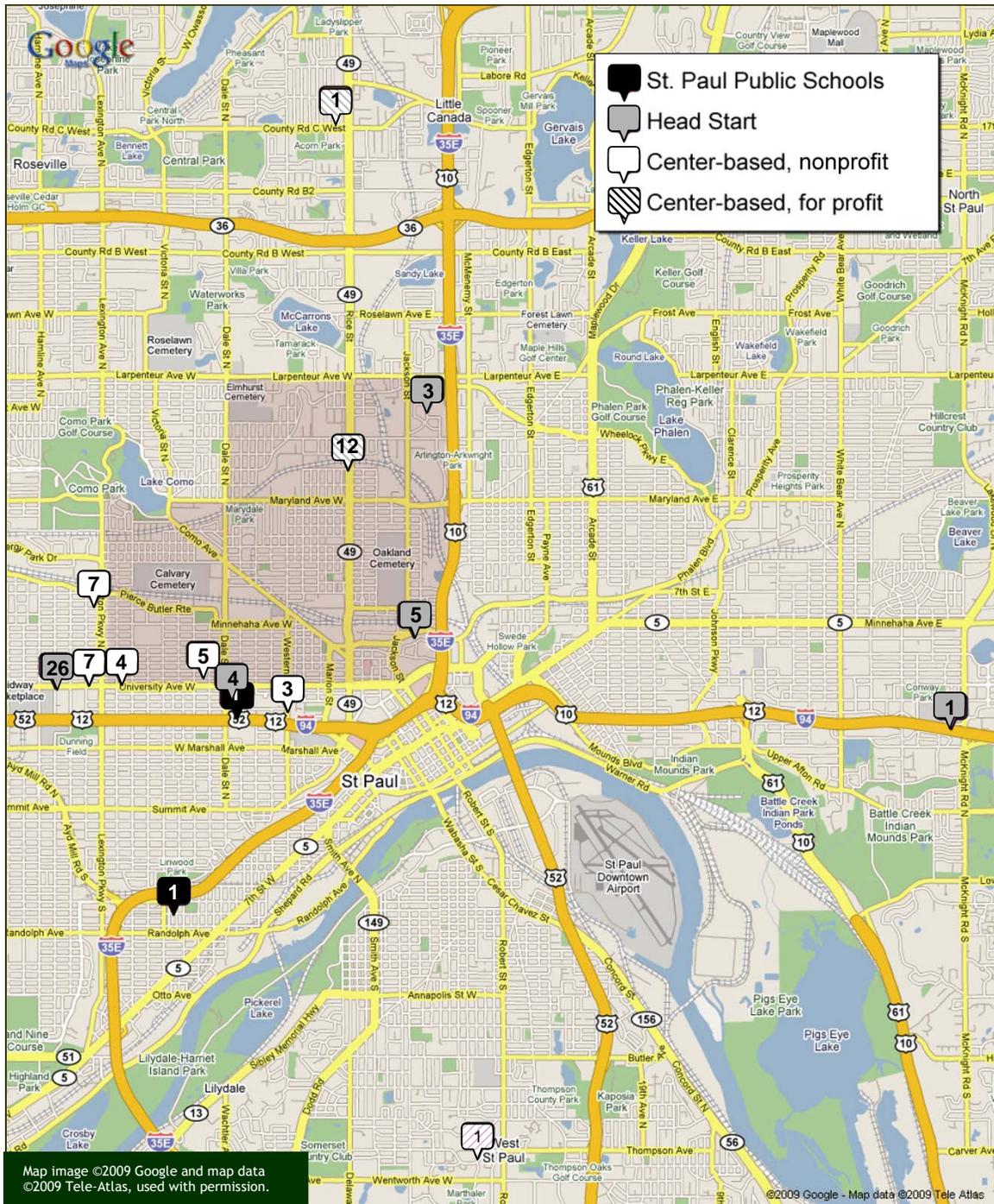


Figure 14 shows the location of Parent Aware-rated programs that children are actually attending using their scholarship funds (as of December 2008). As of December 2008,

- A total of 81 children were using their scholarship funds to attend a high-quality program, in a total of 15 center-based programs.
  - Nearly half of the 81 children (39, 48%) attended one of four Head Start programs, with one Head Start program serving about one-third of the entire group of children (26, 32%).
  - About one-third of the children (26, 32%) were using their scholarship funds to attend one of five center-based nonprofit programs.
  - About one-fifth of the children (14, 17%) were using their scholarship funds to attend one of three center-based for-profit programs.
    - One of these programs was serving most of these children (12 of 14, 86%), and it had recently opened in the pilot areas.
  - Only 2 children (2%) were using their scholarship funds to attend one of two different school-based ECE programs.

Figure 14. Location of ECE Programs Where Children Are Using Scholarship Funds, as of December 2008



Note: The number inside each marker is the number of scholarship children attending each program. The total number of children using scholarship funds attending these programs is 81.

## Year 1 Findings: Qualitative Data about Implementation



In this final section, we summarize qualitative data collected throughout 2008 that describe how the scholarship program is being implemented. Much of the information was presented to MELF in the first implementation brief in October 2008. The key findings about early implementation described in that first implementation brief were based on

- Interviews in June 2008 with the developers, funders, and implementation staff at the beginning of recruitment and enrollment
- Reviews of documents
- Reviews of ongoing correspondence with the implementation team during the first year of implementation
- Data about participating children and families that were exported from Resources for Child Caring, the agency monitoring the scholarship applications and payments.

Below, we include the major conclusions and recommendations from that first implementation brief. Then we describe the activities and strategies MELF and the implementation team undertook to address early challenges in implementing the scholarship program; those activities occurred toward the end of 2008 (between August and December).

After dissemination of the implementation brief in fall 2008, the SRI evaluation team met with the implementation team, MELF staff, and the MELF research consortium team to review the information and develop strategies to address the challenges to implementation. In particular, the brief raised four overarching questions to address as the scholarship program and its evaluation move into Year 2.

- Is it necessary to have a shared vision of the goals and expected outcomes of the pilot project, and what are the possible consequences of not having such a shared vision? If needed, how will such a vision be disseminated?
- Is the time-limited nature of MELF, the scholarship program, and the evaluation adversely affecting MELF's ability to adequately test the scholarship model?
- What can the implementation team do to increase the supply of high-quality early education programs and slots for scholarship-eligible children to attend without interfering with the test of the market-based model on which the scholarship program model is based?
- As currently implemented, is the parent empowerment feature of the scholarship model happening as intended? Are parents really choosing a high-

quality early education program? Are Parent Mentors doing much of the work of finding potentially suitable programs on behalf of the parents? Does the model intend for early education program staff to recruit parents and help them complete the applications?

From the interviews conducted in June 2008, several major implementation findings were documented.

- The majority of respondents described the ultimate goal of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program as promoting school readiness in children from low-income families, a consensus on its goal.
- Almost all respondents referred to collaboration in some form as the key to successful implementation, and they identified it as the main contributing factor to the accomplishments achieved up to that time.

As the program continues to be implemented, a key issue identified was the impact of the duration of the project. Challenges and questions raised by the evaluation team included the following:

- Will ECE programs locate in the targeted communities or expand their existing facilities or staff when there is no guarantee that the scholarship funds will continue beyond 2011?
- Is the planned 4 years for the pilot project long enough for supply to increase? Is 4 years long enough for programs to attain high quality if they are not yet of high quality?
- Is 4 years long enough for parents to create demand for the high-quality programs?
- Is a pilot project of the scholarship model on a short time frame and in a limited geographic area a too conservative or limited test of a model that emphasizes the operation of market forces?

### *Early Implementation Challenges and Subsequent Activities to Address Them*

During the first year of the scholarship program implementation, MELF, the scholarship program developers, the implementation team, and the programs, agencies, and families in the pilot community have been learning about and clarifying the goals and vision of the program. Figure 15 summarizes the lessons learned in Year 1 about the project goals and vision, recommendations made in the implementation brief, and subsequent activities undertaken in the latter half of 2008 to address the recommendations and implementation challenges.

Figure 15. Lessons Learned and Recommendations: Program Goals and Vision

- There appears to be widespread agreement about the overarching goal of the pilot project: promoting school readiness for children from low-income families.
  - School readiness as a goal in an early childhood initiative is one that a wide range of audiences endorses. In particular, many audiences are aware of the body of studies demonstrating that improving school readiness outcomes can have a large impact on reducing the academic achievement gap that exists even at kindergarten entry and persists into later school careers.
- There are a wide range of ideas about other goals and about ideal outcomes of the project. The SRI evaluation team recommends that MELF consider whether it is important to have a common vision and expected outcomes which may be useful for several reasons.
  - It helps project implementers communicate across a range of stakeholders and audiences with clarity about the reasons for the project and the expected outcomes.
  - It helps to obtain buy-in for program activities and the policy and procedural decisions made as the project is implemented.
  - It helps to ensure consistent implementation.
  - Without a clear vision of project goals, stakeholders may develop unrealistic or differing expectations of project outcomes than intended by the project developers.
- To promote clarity and dissemination of the goals and vision of the project to staff involved in implementation, the SRI evaluation team recommends that the implementation team and MELF consider the following:
  - Prepare a two-page fact sheet about the project’s logic model with a brief description to be used with multiple audiences.
  - Disseminate the program’s brochure more widely within the pilot community.
- Respondents view the scholarship program as having multiple positive effects on children, families, programs, and communities/systems, but there is not one set of expectations shared by the majority of respondents. The SRI evaluation team recommends that the implementation team and MELF consider creating a document that identifies succinctly a set of intended outcomes, linked to the scholarship program’s logic model.



Since fall 2008:

- MELF staff has been having discussions about their strategic goals and vision, including clarification of a consistent communication plan about the scholarship program.
- MELF has been updating and posting more information on its website.

In the first year of implementation, a number of accomplishments and successes were identified and are being built on to further implementation in the next year (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Lessons Learned and Recommendations:  
Early Implementation Accomplishments and Successes

- The program is now 12 months into implementation and the programs and agencies administering the scholarship program have worked hard to address many of the initial barriers to implementation.
- The next 2 years of implementation will require continued outreach and recruitment efforts to achieve successful implementation as intended (i.e., providing parent mentoring and/or scholarships for approximately 1100 children by 2011).
- 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).



Since fall 2008...

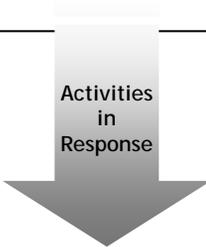
The implementation team has continued to expand its list of involved community organizations, including faith-based groups, domestic violence shelters, charter schools, and craigslist. Some specific examples include:

- Collaboration with the fire department to drop literature throughout the two neighborhoods.
- Staff have attended a variety of events in the schools including the Saint Paul Public Schools Parent Information Fairs and the Children's Museum Ready for School Day event.
- The implementation team is finalizing a PSA that will be aired on television and the Internet, which includes interviews with scholarship parents.
- Public health mentors have called families on their public assistance list and performed more intensive outreach (e.g., taking a fax machine to families' homes to complete the paperwork and ensuring interpreters are available).

A number of challenges and difficulties in implementing the scholarship model in the first year were identified, and several activities and strategies were undertaken in the latter half of 2008 address them (Figure 17).

Figure 17. Lessons Learned and Recommendations: Early Implementation Challenges

- Interview respondents' comments indicate that *clarity of procedures* needs to be improved so that staff and families in the pilot community understand how the pilot program operates and know what is expected of them to participate effectively. The SRI evaluation team makes the following recommendations:
  - Disseminate the scholarship program manual more broadly. Clarify how decisions are made and maintain the manual with a list of policy or procedure changes that are made over time as an appendix (e.g., Frequently Asked Questions).
  - Improve communication within the implementation team and among staff delivering the services to families (i.e., all the parent mentoring agencies).
  - Develop better infrastructure and tracking procedures that support both the daily administration of the program and the evaluation needs.
  - Refine and clarify the target population. Are there types of families that the scholarship program wants to reach that have not enrolled in the scholarship program?
  - Refine and clarify how families are completing the application form and what outreach strategies are most effective at recruiting eligible families.
  - Clarify what parent mentoring means—how does it fit in the intended intervention?
  - Develop and distribute a training manual that clearly and fully defines the parent mentoring components so that all parent mentoring agencies can provide similar supports for families.
  - Hold quarterly meetings with core groups of the parent mentors to discuss implementation and share ideas.
  - Provide opportunities for the parent mentor agencies to share lessons learned with each other.



Activities  
in  
Response

The Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Implementation team recognized that implementing an innovative project like this requires problem-solving many issues on an ongoing basis. Activities that have taken place to address the early implementation challenge of lack of clarity include the following:

- An additional training occurred in October 14, 2008, which 40 parent mentors attended, and a revised module was presented. Parent mentors used the meeting to share information about curriculum use and describe, and problem-solve challenges in working with new immigrant populations.
- A parent mentor newsletter was developed and disseminated in November, December, and January to keep parent mentors informed of changes in policy and new ECE programs locating in the area and to provide a forum for sharing information (including evaluation updates).

Figure 17. Lessons Learned and Recommendations: Early Implementation Challenges (continued)

- For a number of reasons, respondents suggested that the *supply of high-quality programs* available for families to choose for their children may not be sufficient and needs to be increased. Furthermore, information about available programs and slots needs to be communicated better to staff and families in the pilot community. The SRI evaluation team makes the following recommendations:
  - Have the implementation team do a thorough inventory of available high-quality programs and slots in order to consider ways to increase available supply for families in the pilot community and disseminate this information on a regular basis.
  - Develop and use existing information sheets about available programs. For instance, one Parent Mentoring agency has developed a decision chart for Parent Mentors to use when discussing available programs with families that could be shared with other Parent Mentoring agencies.

Consider ways to increase the provision of transportation to ECE programs as a strategy to make more programs available for families to choose. The implementation team needs to address the staff concern that lack of *transportation* is a barrier to getting eligible children enrolled into high-quality programs of their choice. The SRI evaluation team makes the following recommendations:

- Clarify the policy of whether scholarship (and allowance funds) can be used to provide transportation for children to attend ECE programs.
- Provide resources to ECE programs so that they can make informed decisions about how to provide transportation to access the scholarship families.
  - Include this information in the Parent Aware training to ECE programs.
  - Provide information directly to ECE programs about possible transportation options and the associated costs.
  - Involve organizations in the community (e.g., First Children’s Finance) in helping ECE programs think through innovative strategies for addressing transportation barriers.

The implementation team should address the perception by some of the early childhood staff within the pilot community that their experience and expertise in working with the target population has not been fully used in developing policies and procedures for this pilot project. The SRI evaluation team makes the following recommendations:

- Solicit input about specific policies and procedures, particularly with regard to (1) how well staff are working with the target population and the ECE programs in the pilot community and (2) specific suggestions for changes.
- Develop and disseminate to the pilot community one or more briefs to clarify specific policies and procedures for which there are differing opinions about decisions made or debate about optimal decisions.



- Beginning in the second half of 2008, the implementation team began to collect and monitor data about the supply of available ECE program slots in and near districts 6 and 7.
- In regular meetings with program and agencies participating in the scholarship program, the implementation team has been seeking input as well as potential solutions about policies and procedures about implementing the scholarship program.
- The implementation team clarified that the scholarship funds can be used to create transportation options for families to attend ECE programs.

## Summary and Next Steps



The scholarship program is now 12 months into implementation, and the programs and agencies administering and participating in it have worked hard throughout 2008 to get the program model started, to put all the components into operation, including finalizing many operational policies and procedures first developed in 2007, and to address many of the initial barriers to implementation identified in the first half of 2008. All three interventions in the scholarship model were begun and have evolved throughout 2008 (i.e., parent mentoring, distribution and use of scholarship funds to attend high-quality ECE programs, and the Parent Aware ECE program rating system). The continuing implementation and evaluation of the Saint Paul Scholarship Program model in the pilot community in 2009 will yield additional and new information about how the model is being put into operation and the impacts it is producing for children, families, programs, and the pilot community.

### *Need for Revision of Scholarship Program Evaluation Design*

The evaluation of the scholarship program model was designed in 2007, a final design was agreed on and presented to the MELF board in October 2007, and implementation of the design began in January 2008. The original design called for recruiting a total of 800 children to participate in the evaluation:

- 200 1-year-olds receiving scholarship funds and enrolled in ECE programs in 2010 (Infant Cohort 1)
- Two cohorts of 300 3-year-olds
  - One cohort to receive scholarship funds and enroll in ECE programs by fall 2008 (Cohort 2)
  - The second cohort to receive scholarship funds and enroll in ECE programs by fall 2009 (Cohort 3)
- The 600 children in Cohorts 2 and 3 were expected to receive 2 years of high-quality ECE and enter kindergarten in either 2010 or 2011 and participate in the outcome evaluation before the sunset on MELF in December 2011.<sup>14</sup>

SRI International planned to use a regression discontinuity design using these 600 children. However, given the shortfall in enrollment in 2008, a revised evaluation design was needed. SRI has prepared a memo with a revised design, submitted to MELF in January 2009. The proposed changes to the evaluation design will be discussed with MELF and CEED staff over the first quarter of 2009. Below, we

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<sup>14</sup> The 200 infants would enter ECE programs before 2011, but additional follow-up would be needed after December 2011 to track the school readiness outcomes for this group of children.

briefly describe the data collection, data analysis, and data reporting that will occur in 2009. The SRI evaluation team will continue to document the model's implementation (the process evaluation component) and collect child, family, program and community outcome data (the outcome evaluation component).

### *Process Evaluation in 2009*

In 2009, SRI will continue to collect data about how implementation is progressing. These activities included interviews and focus groups with participants at all levels (e.g., funders, administrators, ECE program directors, parent mentors, parents) that will help answer the following questions:

- How did parents learn about the scholarship, and why are they participating and choosing the ECE programs their children attend? Specifically, are they using the Parent Aware rating system?
- How are ECE program directors using scholarship funds in their programs?
- How is the scholarship program impacting how ECE programs operate?
- Why did the New Horizons program, for example, choose to locate in the pilot areas of Saint Paul? How does this program director see the scholarship program affecting such decision-making? Are there other programs that chose to locate a site in the pilot areas?
- How is the time-limited nature of the scholarship program affecting how the parents and programs are making decisions?
- Why have some ECE programs in and near the pilot areas chosen not to participate in Parent Aware and the scholarship program?

### *Outcome Evaluation in 2009*

Although there was a shortfall in enrollment, it is still possible to implement a pre-post design, with approximately 200 children (Cohorts 2 and 3). In 2009, in this pre-post design outcome study, the evaluation team will continue to collect child and family data about Cohorts 2 and 3 including

- Child assessment data: (1) direct child assessments completed in the ECE program using standardized assessment tools to measure children's cognitive, language, and literacy development at baseline (i.e., when the children are 3 to 4 years old) and (2) teacher checklists about child social competence and behavior and general development.
  - These data will provide information on the developmental status of 3-year-old children with scholarship funds as they enter ECE programs and the developmental progress they make after approximately 1 year of ECE program participation.
- Parent interview data: collected on an annual basis for Cohorts 2 and 3.
  - These data will provide information on the needs and risk status of children and families participating in the scholarship program. They will also provide

information about parents' perception of their child's development and health.

Finally, SRI will conduct data analysis of changes in the supply of high-quality ECE programs and slots in and near districts 6 and 7 in Saint Paul (in collaboration with the Parent Aware evaluation team). Also in coordination with Child Trends, which is conducting the evaluation of Parent Aware for MELF, SRI has worked to track the number of ECE programs rated in the scholarship pilot areas and the greater Saint Paul area and the ratings the programs has received. As Child Trends staff continues to collect data on the observed quality of those ECE programs, the characteristics of program staff and curriculum, and the experience of ECE programs participating in Parent Aware, SRI will report on those ECE programs in which participating children are using their scholarship funds.

Year 2 also will involve designing and conducting a cost study of the scholarship program model. This cost study was part of the original evaluation design and will be conducted by the proposed partner from RAND (under the direction of Lynn Karoly, Ph.D.).

# Appendix



# **Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Pilot Manual**

**2008**



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## Background Information

The Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF) was established as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization in 2005. MELF was created through a partnership of leaders from the foundation, corporate, and civic sectors to address growing concerns about the lack of school readiness among many children entering kindergarten, and the significant impact this was having now, and would have in the future, on Minnesota's economy and quality of life.

While early childhood research shows that well-focused early childhood development (ECE) investments can produce high public returns, particularly for children living in families with low income levels, questions remain about the mechanism(s) that will most effectively bring ECE to a larger scale.

As part of its strategy, MELF has designed a pilot project to test the effectiveness of a market-oriented scholarship model based on a model proposed by Art Rolnick and Rob Grunewald from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. The **Scholarship Program** provides scholarships to low-income families in Saint Paul's Planning Districts 6 & 7 (see map of pilot area in Appendices B & C) to allow children to attend a high-quality **Early Childhood Education (ECE) program** at ages 3 and 4. Families select from area public and private ECE programs that meet quality standards set by MELF's pilot Parent Aware rating system and program approval at the Minnesota Department of Education, or provisional rating set forth by the Minnesota legislation.

The Scholarship Program also includes a parent mentoring component beginning as early as prenatal that provides families guidance on selecting an ECE program, skills and knowledge necessary to promote school readiness throughout their child's early years, and information about health, child development, and community resources to support their family's needs. The **City of Saint Paul** has included the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program as part of its larger education initiative and will provide leadership and coordination. Through this pilot, MELF's goal is to provide parent mentoring and/or scholarships for approximately 1,100 low-income children by 2011.

### Program Development Process

A working group named the Scholarship Pilot Implementation Team (Implementation Team - see Appendix A for membership) met regularly for the year prior to program implementation to develop the guidelines outlined in the Scholarship Program Manual. The Implementation Team met with the Scholarship Advisory Group (see Appendix A for membership) and various other organizations, including **Resources for Child Caring (RCC)**, **Saint Paul-Ramsey County Public Health (Public Health)**, and the **Parent Aware** development team to solicit input and guidance.

The following decision values were applied in making determinations regarding policy and administration for the Scholarship Program:

- Ease of use for families
- Administrative simplicity
- Consistency with early childhood development theory
- Consistency with economic theory

The primary content of Scholarship Program Manual is presented in the following three sections. *Eligibility and Recruitment* discusses the requirements families must meet in order to participate in the program and the outreach strategies recommended for informing and recruiting families into the program. *Parent Mentoring* presents the goals and content of parent mentoring and how to use and coordinate existing home visiting programs. *Scholarships* discusses ECE program eligibility, the dosage and price of scholarships, and the timing of payments made to ECE programs. Each section begins with a description of policies and activities followed by the administrative duties required to carry them out. Words in **bold** are included in a Definition of Terms section at the end.

## **Family Eligibility and Recruitment**

### **Family Eligibility**

Family eligibility for parent mentoring and scholarships is based on child age, residence, and income. The parent mentoring component provides home visits from prenatal through kindergarten entry. Scholarships are available from age 3 until kindergarten entry. Families' roles and responsibilities are outlined in the application.

Families that apply are required to meet the eligibility requirements discussed below. The eligibility requirements are verified once at program entry; families are not required to re-verify later in the program. Once a family is accepted, they are in the program until the child reaches kindergarten.

#### *Child age*

Age cut-offs for both parent mentoring and scholarship eligibility occur on September 1 of the scholarship intake year. Families eligible for parent mentoring must have a pregnant mother or child less than 1 year old on September 1 of the intake year. Parent mentoring starts on a rolling enrollment basis; once families are deemed eligible, parent mentoring will begin shortly thereafter. (See Appendices I and J for details on annual cohorts.)

Families eligible for scholarships must have a child 3 years old on September 1 of the intake year. Only in the first year of the Scholarship Program do children age 3 on September 1, 2007, enroll in a program on a rolling enrollment basis. That is, once a child is deemed eligible, he or she can be enrolled in an ECE program. In subsequent years, the scholarship is applied as of Sept. 1 of that year, not on the day the child turns 3.

Families must show proof of child's age at intake. Pregnant mothers entering their child in the prenatal-age 1 cohort are excluded from this requirement.

#### *Proof of age*

The following documents can be used to verify child age

- Birth certificate
- Crib Card
- Passport
- Consulate registration card (Matricula Consular)
- I-94 Card
- Immunization record
- Baptismal record
- Health Insurance card

Eligible children must enroll in an ECE program by either Aug. 31, 2008 during the Ramp-up Year, or by January 15<sup>th</sup> in subsequent years. See Appendix J for clarification.

*Address*

Families must reside in Saint Paul Planning Districts 6 or 7 at enrollment of program. The following methods may be used to verify residence:

- Driver’s license
- State identification card
- Passport
- School identification card
- Birth certificate
- Shelter Verification form
- Rental lease
- Mortgage document
- Recent utility bill

If families move from Districts 6 or 7, they are still eligible to receive parent mentoring and scholarships provided they remain in Ramsey or Hennepin County. However, a family move from Districts 6 or 7 may result in an interruption in service if parent mentoring services and/or a scholarship-eligible ECE program are not available in the family’s new location.

*Income*

Families living at up to 185% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG) are eligible to apply for the program. Table 1 shows the Federal Poverty Guidelines for 100% FPG and 185% FPG.

**Table 1. Federal Poverty Guidelines\***

Family Income		Family Size
100%FPG	185% FPG	
\$14,000	\$25,900	2
\$17,600	\$32,560	3
\$21,200	\$39,220	4
\$24,800	\$45,880	5
\$28,400	\$52,540	6
\$32,000	\$59,200	7
\$35,600	\$65,860	8
Add \$3,600 for each additional family member		
Federal Register, Jan. 2008		

\* Updated annually

*Proof of Income*

The following methods can be used to verify income:

- Tax Form
- W-2 Form
- Pay Stub
- Statement from Employer

Income verification will also include:

- Child Support Payments/Letter
- Deductions including medical, dental, and visual insurance premiums, court-ordered child support paid for children not living in the home, and court-ordered spousal support

Families who are currently enrolled in MFIP (Minnesota Family Investment Program) or the Minnesota Child Care Assistance Program may have RCC verify the child age, address through Ramsey County in lieu of sending in above documents.

### *Children in foster care*

Children in the foster care system are eligible to receive allowances if the child's foster care family is located within a pilot area.

If the child's biological parent or parents are actively working in partnership with the foster care family to provide for the child's well-being, the application should be completed by the child's biological parent or parents in partnership with the foster care family and county worker.

If the child's biological parent or parents are not working in partnership with the foster care family, the county may apply on behalf of the child.

The income of the child's biological parent or parents should be used to determine income eligibility. If the child's parent is unwilling, unable or unavailable to provide proof of income, the county may be able to share this information with you as part of the welfare system, similar to the way data is shared for purposes of CCAP and MFIP.

Use the number of family members in the child's biological family to determine household size, not the foster care family.

If the parent has abandoned the child and the county has no information about the family's income level, the child's family income should be considered \$0.

### *Service agreement*

Parents accepted into the program will be required to complete an application to receive parent mentoring and scholarships. The application includes expectations that a family must follow in order to participate in the program. Note that families will only be allowed to receive a maximum of two years of scholarship. If families choose to wait an extra year to send their child to kindergarten (i.e., the child would enter kindergarten at age 6), the Scholarship Program will not pay for the additional year of scholarship. The Implementation Team reviewed service agreements from Invest Early in Itasca County and a number of Head Start centers.

By completing and signing the application, families agree to the following:

- Enroll their children in a program that provides child care/early education for at least 12 hours per week.
- Select a child care/early education program that has achieved 3 or 4 stars or a provisional rating through Parent Aware, or provisional approval through the Minnesota Department of Education or Minnesota Department of Human Services.
- Give the child care/early education program a two week notice if they move or decide to transfer my child to another program.
- Meet with their assigned parent mentor on a regular basis.

*Population Statistics*

Table 2 shows the estimated number of eligible children in Districts 6 & 7 in a given year based on 2000 Census data. Note that according to recent research by Social Compact ([www.socialcompact.org](http://www.socialcompact.org)), the Census often underestimates the population count in urban areas.

**Table 2. Approximate Number of Eligible Children in Planning Districts 6 & 7**

% FPG (1999 Income)	Annual Total # of Eligible 3 and 4 Year Old Children
100 %	498
125%	604
175%	870
185%	924

Table 3 includes Ramsey County data from December 2006 showing a total of 467 families in the two ZIP codes encompassing most of Planning Districts 6 & 7 were receiving some form of child care assistance.

**Table 3. Ramsey County Child Care Assistance Data by ZIP Code\***

Zip Code	Basic Sliding Fee	MFIP	Transition Year
55103	42	100	14
55117	111	145	55
TOTAL	153	245	69

\*not all families include child of 3 or 4 years.

**Family Recruitment**

Eligible families will be identified through a number of channels. Parent mentors will serve as one of the frontline organizations for recruiting. In addition, families will be identified by hospitals, social service agencies, and WIC offices, and medical clinics. In addition, information on parent mentoring and scholarships will be placed in neighborhood newspapers, community centers, and faith-based organizations.

Head Start and Public schools will also be likely recruiting partners, as will Resources for Child Caring (RCC). The children currently enrolled in each of these programs, as well as the children on any of their waiting lists, could all be screened to determine their eligibility for the Scholarship Program.

The Implementation Team will create relationships with other recruiting partners (hospitals, prenatal care providers, FFN providers, pediatricians, social workers, ECE programs, faith-based organizations, and other community-based organizations in and serving the target areas). These partners will be informed about eligibility requirements, application procedures, and program components of the Scholarship Program, Once identified, a family will complete the necessary paperwork and will be screened for eligibility into the Scholarship Program.

### **Family Eligibility and Recruitment Administration**

The City of Saint Paul will implement a system for ongoing marketing of the program to families, and work with the Implementation Team to create and revise the parent brochure, scholarship application, and program policies and procedures. RCC will process applications, determine eligibility, and manage waiting lists (if needed). Below are considerations for each of these administrative tasks.

#### *Marketing*

The City of Saint Paul will oversee a broad ongoing strategy to make information available to parents. The Scholarship Implementation Team initially developed marketing materials to be used in each partnering organization. These materials are translated into languages most appropriate for the community.

#### *Receiving applications and determining eligibility*

RCC will send out applications to interested families and receive and review completed applications. If eligible, RCC will notify the family of eligibility via a letter from Mayor Coleman and communicate the next steps for the family. If a family's eligibility is unclear or incomplete RCC will follow-up with the family to collect missing information.

#### *Waiting lists*

RCC will create a waiting list if needed. If a waiting list develops, families will be prioritized on a first come first served basis. A slot that opens is filled as long as the child who left wasn't going to be 5 years old on Sept. 1 of the current year.

#### *Brochure for parents*

A parent brochure explains the parent mentoring and scholarship components of the Scholarship Program, program eligibility guidelines, and the application process.

### **When Family Ends Scholarship Program**

- Family moves outside of Ramsey or Hennepin County.
- Continual non-response from family enrolled in parent mentoring. See page 17.
- Continual absence from ECE program. ECE program and parent mentor will work with

the family to improve attendance, but at some point, on a case by case basis, RCC will determine the date when a child is no longer part of the Scholarship Program.

- Family chooses to exit the Scholarship Program.

In each of these cases RCC will inform the family that they are no longer eligible or enrolled in the Scholarship Program.

## Parent Mentoring

Parent mentors visit the homes of enrolled families beginning prenatally until children enter kindergarten. The primary goal of parent mentoring is that each participating parent is provided with information necessary to select a high quality ECE program and be involved in the program's activities and child's education. Secondary goals of parent mentoring include the following: 1) parents have skills and knowledge necessary to promote school readiness throughout their child's early years (birth to 5); and 2) parents have access to community resources to support their family's education and health needs. In summary, parent mentoring will provide a continuum of contact and service prenatal-age 5 to help keep parents engaged in their children's development and education prior to their children reaching age eligibility for scholarships (age 3) and beyond.

The primary goal requires fewer financial resources to accomplish than the secondary goals; nevertheless, providing parents with information to select a high quality ECE program is central to the Scholarship Program's logic model (see Appendices F and G). That is, without information on selecting a high quality ECE program, parents will likely be less able to select the best setting for their child, and parents will less likely be as involved in their child's educational experience.<sup>15</sup>

The secondary goals of building and enhancing parent skills to promote school readiness and access to community resources address two fundamental reasons for establishing the Parent Mentoring and Scholarship Program. First, the early years of life are essential to child brain development prior to the age of 3 when children are eligible for scholarships. The parent mentoring component is designed to improve early health, nutrition, bonding and interactions between child and parents. Because of the connection to parent mentors, families who start parent mentoring prenatally or up to the child's first birthday will hopefully be more likely to have their children enter the scholarship phase at an appropriate developmental level. Second, low-income families face barriers to participating in opportunities for their children. These barriers include unemployment, lack of transportation, chemical dependency, mental health issues, among others. The mentoring component is not expected to address these barriers directly, but to connect the family to resources to alleviate these problems.

### *Content*

Parent mentoring involves home visitors trained to work with parents of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Parent mentoring employs a strengths-based approach, building on family assets and involving parents in the decision-making and planning process.

Mentoring services will focus on various family needs, including:

- Assistance with choosing a quality ECE program, including family friend and neighbor (FFN) care, for children younger than age 3;
- Encouraging preventative health, including check-ups, immunizations, and early screenings
- Education about child development, including health, nutrition and early literacy

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<sup>15</sup> Families eligible for scholarships can only choose among high quality ECE programs; nevertheless, parent mentors can help families make choices based on the characteristics of the ECE programs.

- Assisting families in accessing other community resources necessary to meet basic needs (financial, food, etc.)

### *Dosage*

The mentoring relationship includes more frequent visits during the first few months and years of a child's life and less frequent visits as the child grows older, particularly at ages 3 and 4. In addition, an intake screening by Public Health of the family will be used to determine the necessary amount of parent mentoring. After Public Health assigns a family to a home visiting agency, the home visiting agency should meet with the family within four weeks of receiving the assignment. A family with relatively more challenges would receive more frequent visits relative to a family with fewer challenges. Ideally, a parent mentor will develop a relatively long-term relationship with a family, but when parent mentors change, a smooth transition will be planned to minimize disruption. A more detailed discussion of dosage levels for each age cohort is listed below.

### *Cultural Diversity*

Mentoring will be culturally appropriate, language-appropriate, and responsive to the unique needs of families.

### *Eligible home visiting programs*

As part of the MELF's commitment to building capacity and leveraging existing resources rather than creating new programs, the Scholarship Program will use existing home visiting programs to deliver mentoring services to participating families. Home visiting programs submitted a response to an RFP released by Saint Paul-Ramsey County Department of Public Health (Public Health) and will enter into a contract relationship. A number of children eligible for parent mentoring in Districts 6 & 7 currently receive home visits from these organizations. The Scholarship Program will harness the resources these programs provide.

## **Parent Mentor Training**

### *General*

Home visitors are trained to work with parents of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers on issues including health, nutrition, child development, and education. Home visitors include early childhood professionals and public health nurses. The Scholarship Program does not provide general training on parent mentoring. The Program does, however, provide training on the Scholarship Program components, the Selecting Quality Early Education and Care Module (see below). Home visiting programs that provide parent mentoring for the Scholarship Program should staff accordingly. Participating programs are expected to provide families with experienced, well-trained mentors.

### *Selecting Quality Early Education and Care Module<sup>16</sup>*

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<sup>16</sup> Training module developed by RCC and Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network

The Scholarship Program does provide training to parent mentors on how to select a high-quality ECE program when their children are eligible for scholarships at ages 3 and high-quality ECE settings prior to age 3. The training includes the following elements:

- Providing parents with information about the importance of quality early care and education.
- Guiding parents on how to select quality child care using Parent Aware ratings. If parents select family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care or an informal ECE program prior to age 3, providing guidance on elements that are important to consider.
- For families with children less than age 1 born between Sept. 2, 2006 and Sept. 1, 2007, informing parents about the scholarships that will be available when their children turn 3.
- Informing about and assisting parents in enrolling in CDBG programs/CCAP.
- For parents with children ages 3 and 4, informing parents about the ECE programs available for their children and helping parents select an ECE program.
- Collecting data from home visits for Scholarship Program evaluation.
- Recruiting families into the Scholarship Program based on contacts developed through home visits. That is, parent mentors serve as on-the-ground recruiters in District 6 & 7 neighborhoods.

Staff from home visiting agencies received training on the Module and include it in their curriculum. Home visiting organizations will be compensated for delivering the Module (see Contracts section below).

#### *Foundational Mentoring*

Funds for Foundational Mentoring are available to home visiting agencies that provide services to eligible families not already enrolled in a home visiting agency's program. When such a child is enrolled in the Scholarship Program, the home visiting agency serving the family will receive Foundational Mentoring funds, as listed below. The level of service (number of visits, length of visits, etc.) the home visiting agency provides for families receiving Foundational Mentoring in the Scholarship Program can differ from the level of service the home visiting agency provides as part of its program.

#### **Administration**

Public Health will administer the parent mentoring component, including the following tasks:

#### *Family recruitment and start time*

Family recruitment is outlined in the previous section of the manual. Public Health will play a strong role in recruiting families with pregnant mothers and children younger than age 1. About half of eligible families in Districts 6 & 7 would have likely come into contact with Public Health's home visiting program without the presence of the Scholarship Program. Parent mentors will play an on-the-ground role in recruiting families into the program for both age cohorts.

An intensive recruitment process will start in the fall of each year (beginning in 2007). Some families will already be receiving home visiting. Families with children less than age 1 born between Sept. 2, 2006, and Sept. 1, 2007, will be eligible for scholarships when their children

turn 3 in 2010. Therefore recruiting this particular group is a priority because the children will receive the entire continuum of services – parent mentoring and one year of a scholarship. Additional families could begin receiving home visiting during the fall. Children born after Sept. 1, 2007, will not receive scholarships unless the Scholarship Program is extended.

#### *Assigning parent mentors to families*

Once a family is enrolled in the Scholarship Program program, a parent mentor will be assigned to the family. Public Health developed a system to determine which home visiting organization is the best match for the families entering the Scholarship Program with children prenatal to age 1 and at age 3. For all families, an intake visit will occur to assess the best match for a parent mentor, and determine the initial level of the intensity of parent mentoring required. After Public Health assigns a family to a home visiting agency, the home visiting agency should meet with the family within four weeks of receiving the assignment. For families entering the Scholarship Program with children age 3, parent mentoring will be less frequent and focus on maintaining stability and engagement with their child’s ECE program.

#### *Contracts with and payments to home visiting organizations*

Public Health will administer contracts with area home visiting agencies. Home visiting agencies will sign contracts to deliver the following services:

- Provide the Selecting Quality Early Education and Care Module for families currently receiving their home visiting services.
- Provide Foundational Mentoring to additional families; also deliver the Module.

The payment amounts listed below will be provided on a per family basis. A home visiting agency has discretion regarding how they spread payments out over the families they provide services. That is, some families may require more resources than the given payment amount while other families may require less.

#### *Payment Amounts*

##### Selecting Quality Early Education and Care Module

\$400 per family annually, or \$100 quarterly

Frequency of visits: Either including content in the home visiting agency’s current schedule of foundational parent mentoring visits (see below) and/or adding visits to cover the content. On average, it should take the equivalent of three to four home visits to deliver the Module.

#### *Prenatal-Age 1*

- Provide parents with information about the importance of quality care. This information will likely be more pertinent when the child is closer to age 1.
- Guide parents on how to select quality child care using Parent Aware ratings. If parents select FFN care prior to scholarship age, provide guidance on elements that are important to consider.
- For families with children less than age 1 born between Sept. 2, 2006 and Sept. 1, 2007, inform parents the child will be eligible for a scholarship at age 3.

- Inform about and assist parents in enrolling in MFIP/CCAP. (For all age groups)
- Collect data from home visits for Scholarship Program evaluation. (For all age groups)

Age 1-Age 2

- Reinforce the importance of quality care.
- Guide parents on how to select quality child care using Parent Aware ratings. If parents select FFN care prior to scholarship age, provide guidance on elements that are important to consider.

Age 2-Age 3

- Same information as above and begin helping parents enroll in ECE program:
  - Provide parents a list of ECE programs.
  - Possibly make site visits with parents.
  - Parents select program for their child.

Age 3-Age 4

- Help families when they move to ensure they stay connected with current ECE program or move to another program.
- Encourage parent involvement in ECE program.

Age 4-Age 5

- Help families when they move to ensure they stay connected with current ECE program or move to another program.
- Encourage parent involvement in ECE program.
- Around the time of kindergarten enrollment, check with family to ensure they are involved in the process.

Foundational Mentoring

Home visiting agencies identify children who are funded through their regular program and children who are not and therefore are eligible for Foundational Mentoring funds. Home visiting agencies will receive the following payments on a per child basis.

**Table 4. Budget for Foundational Parent Mentoring by Child Age**

Less than one	\$1,900
1-year-olds	\$1,400
2-year-olds	\$900
3-year-olds	\$400
4-year-olds	\$400

For each age group, visits should include the information that the home visiting agencies already provide to families. The topics listed below serve as guidelines.

Prenatal-Age 1: \$1,900 per family annually, or \$475 quarterly

Frequency of visits: Every other week to once per month

Topics:

- Maternal and child health and nutrition
- Child/parent bonding and interactions
- Information on community resources (For all age groups)

Age 1-Age 2: \$1,400 per family annually, or \$350 quarterly

Frequency of visits: Every other week to once per month

Topics:

- Maternal and child health and nutrition
- Child/parent bonding and interactions

Age 2-Age 3: \$900 per family annually, or \$225 quarterly

Frequency of visits: Once per month to every 6 or 7 weeks

Topics:

- Maternal and child health and nutrition
- Child/parent bonding and interactions

Age 3-Age 4: \$400 per family annually, or \$100 quarterly

Frequency of visits: For some families check in every 3 to 5 months, while others more frequently, especially when child attendance slips or if the family moves.

- Coach and encourage parent involvement in child's education at home, and perhaps reinforce activities child participated in at the ECE program.

Age 4-Age 5: \$400 per family annually, or \$100 quarterly

Frequency of visits: For some families check in every 3 to 5 months, while others more frequently during occasions when child attendance slips or if the family moves.

- Coach and encourage parent involvement in child's education at home, and perhaps reinforce activities child participated in at the ECE program.

#### *Payment schedule*

Payments will be made on a quarterly basis beginning with an Advance payment to enable home visiting agencies to staff up. In order to calculate quarterly payments, the home visiting agency provides Public Health with the number of months X number of families received the Module (families that are enrolled in the home visiting agency's program) and the number of months X number of families received Foundational Mentoring and the Module. Below is an example of a potential payment schedule.

February 2007	Advance payment
April 1, 2008	Payment for 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter depending on how many families are served

July 1, 2008	Payment for 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter
October 1, 2008	Payment for 3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter
January 1, 2009	Payment for 4 <sup>th</sup> quarter

*Evaluation*

In working with **SRI**, the Implementation Team and Public Health may balance allowing flexibility in home visiting models and prescriptive elements to provide consistency for evaluation. The evaluation will look at child outcomes at age 3 to assess the effect of the parent mentoring program prior to children entering the scholarship component. Additional outcomes to measure include school readiness at kindergarten and parent involvement in selecting and participating in parent programs at an ECE program.

*Budget*

The enclosed spreadsheet allows for changing assumptions on the number of families currently served by home visiting agencies. Using conservative assumptions, the 4-year total would cost about \$3.1 million, not including administration costs incurred by Public Health.

*Minimum number of visits for payment*

Home visiting programs are reimbursed based on the number of families they are serving, not on a per visit basis. Therefore, home visiting programs allocate their resources over the balance of the families they serve based on family needs. That is, some families may require more visits than others. Home visiting programs are expected to generally follow the visit frequency guidelines in the manual. The lower limits presented below denote the base number of visits required to receive payment in the quarter. If visits are less than the limit, the home visiting program can't count the family for quarterly reimbursement. Also note that after Public Health assigns a family to a home visiting agency, the home visiting agency should meet with the family within four weeks of receiving the assignment. Home visiting agencies should contact Public Health with questions regarding required number of visits.

**Prenatal-Age 1**

Lower limit: Program meets with family 3 times per quarter.

**Age 1-Age 2**

Lower limit: Program meets with family 2 times per quarter.

**Age 2-Age 3**

Lower limit: Program attempts to meet with family at least 1 time per quarter. Succeeds in meeting with family 1 time in 6 month period.

**Age 3-Age 5**

Lower limit: Program meets with family 2 times per year.

*Cessation of parent mentoring by parents*

Parents originally sign a service agreement to participate in parent mentoring services. If a family decides to refuse parent mentoring services prior to their child turning 3 years of age, the

child won't be guaranteed a scholarship at age 3. The family can apply for a scholarship when their child turns 3, but will receive one based on availability. However, if a family decides to refuse parent mentoring services after the child has enrolled in an ECE program at age 3, the refusal won't affect the child's scholarship.

Families who enter during pregnancy through age 1, but drop out prior to their child's first birthday, can be replaced with a family in the same cohort who's child is less than age 1 with permission by the MELF. Families that drop out of mentoring with a child older than age 1 are not replaced.

A parent mentoring agency should end service to a family if there has been no response after two months since the time of referral to the parent mentoring agency *or* three months after a parent mentoring agency's last contact with a family, *and* three documented attempts to contact/see client using options of phone, letter and drop in visit, with one of the three attempts being a drop in visit. Mentoring agencies must notify Public Health as soon as this service ends via e-mail to [bill.jungwirth@co.ramsey.mn.us](mailto:bill.jungwirth@co.ramsey.mn.us) and cc. to [sue.mitchell@co.ramsey.mn.us](mailto:sue.mitchell@co.ramsey.mn.us). Public Health will inform RCC through an e-mail and make a notation on the shared list when a family's parent mentoring case has been closed.

If the family has not enrolled in an ECE program, RCC then sends the family a letter explaining that their scholarship has been closed and that they would need to re-apply for the scholarship program. If the family has enrolled in an ECE program, scholarship funds continue to be paid to the ECE program.

#### *Total number of children*

See Appendices I and J for the annual number of children enrolled each year. 1,100 families will receive 1 to almost 4 years of parent mentoring.

#### *Final consideration*

Home visiting services often differ based on the unique training, funding, mission, and/or capacity of an organization. Because of this service variety, agencies may not have consistent contact or coordination with other home visiting organizations. A secondary goal of this pilot is to improve coordination and learning among home visiting agencies while increasing access to parent mentoring.

## **Scholarships**

Scholarships are available to families living below 185% FPG in Saint Paul Planning Districts 6 & 7 when their children are 3 and 4 years old (see Family Eligibility and Recruitment for details). Parents may choose between a half-day and full-day ECE program for their child. Only ECE programs that meet eligibility standards can enroll children with scholarships. This section presents policies regarding ECE program eligibility, the scholarship dosage and amount, and administrative tasks.

**ECE programs eligible for scholarships:** To access a scholarship, the ECE program

must have a Parent Aware rating of 3 or 4 or receive a provisional rating by either the Minnesota Department of Human Services or the Minnesota Department of Education. Programs must also sign a program agreement from with Resources for Child Caring (see Appendix L).

Eligible programs may include:

- Private or non-profit child care centers
- Licensed family child care programs
- Private or non-profit preschools
- Public school-based programs
- Head Start programs

#### *Location*

ECD program location is restricted to the Parent Aware pilot area: the City of Saint Paul, neighborhoods in North Minneapolis and Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties. However, accredited programs in the 7-county metropolitan area may apply to be a part of Parent Aware. Any of the above ECE programs may apply to participate in the Scholarship Program.

#### *Maintaining approval status*

ECE programs must maintain **approval status** via Parent Aware.

#### **Scholarship Dosage and Amount**

Research doesn't definitively set the specific amount of time per day and days per year that achieve school readiness outcomes for low-income children. Some therapeutic preschools offer intensive center-based experiences, but only a few hours per day and not all five days per week. Studies in Oklahoma, Michigan and New Jersey show that high-quality half-day programs 2 ½ to 3 hours per day, 4 or 5 days per week, demonstrate large effects on school readiness. In addition, high-quality child care programs that engage children 8 or more hours per day 5 days per week have shown positive school readiness outcomes.

Research does point to the elements of a program that achieve school readiness outcomes, reflected in the Parent Aware rating too. Furthermore, high-quality ECE programs often cost more than lower quality ECE programs. For example, in order to attract and retain well-trained teachers, high-quality ECE programs may pay higher salaries.

Goals for scholarships:

- Remove financial barriers to families choosing high-quality child care and early education opportunities.
- Provide resources for ECE programs to provide high-quality services that produce improved school readiness outcomes for low-income children.
- Provide incentives to the ECE market to spur new entrants and expansion among current ECE programs.

#### *Dosage and scholarship amounts*

##### Half-day program

Eligible half-day ECE programs include private and publicly funded child care programs, Head Start and Saint Paul Public School programs that provide services 12 hours to 17 hours per week. Payment rates are tiered at two levels of service, 12 to 14 hours per week and 15 to 17 hours per week. When an ECE program applies to participate in the pilot, it declares which level(s) of service it provides.

Half-day ECE programs will be paid up to \$140 per week for a 12 to 14 hour program and \$160 per week for a 15 to 17 hour program. All programs will be paid on a 4-week reimbursement basis.

Example reimbursement set-up:

<b>Hours per Week</b>	<b>Weekly Rate</b>	<b>Annual</b>	<b>4-week Reimbursement</b>
12 to 14	\$140	\$7,280	\$560
15 to 17	\$160	\$8,320	\$640

Full-day program

Eligible full-day programs include center-based and family-based child care programs, as well as half-day programs listed above that provide wrap-around care. The minimum hours of service is 35, which mirrors the minimum number of hours a program needs to provide services in order to qualify for a CCAP weekly reimbursement rate.

Center-based programs will be paid up to \$250 per week and family-based programs will be paid up to \$180 per week. The difference in the two rates matches the difference in Ramsey County’s child care subsidy reimbursement rates between a center-based and family-based program. As described in the Manual, programs will be paid on a 4-week reimbursement basis.

Example reimbursement set-up:

<b>35 Hours</b>	<b>Weekly rate</b>	<b>Annual</b>	<b>4-week Reimbursement</b>
Center-based	\$250	\$13,000	\$1,000
Family-based	\$180	\$9,360	\$720

ECE programs that offer 18 to 34 Hours

ECE programs that offer more than a half-day (12 to 17 hours per week) but less than a full-day (35 or more hours per week) will be reimbursed on the following scales for center-based and family-based programs. Fractional weekly hours are rounded down to the nearest hour (for example, 29.5 hours = 29 hours on the payment scale).

<b>Center-based Programs, 18 to 34 Hours per Week</b>			
<b>Hours</b>	<b>Weekly rate</b>	<b>Annual</b>	<b>4-week Reimbursement</b>
18	\$165	\$8,580	\$660
19	\$170	\$8,840	\$680
20	\$175	\$9,100	\$700
21	\$180	\$9,360	\$720
22	\$185	\$9,620	\$740
23	\$190	\$9,880	\$760
24	\$195	\$10,140	\$780
25	\$200	\$10,400	\$800
26	\$205	\$10,660	\$820
27	\$210	\$10,920	\$840
28	\$215	\$11,180	\$860
29	\$220	\$11,440	\$880
30	\$225	\$11,700	\$900
31	\$230	\$11,960	\$920
32	\$235	\$12,220	\$940
33	\$240	\$12,480	\$960
34	\$245	\$12,740	\$980

<b>Family-based Programs, 18 to 34 Hours per Week</b>			
<b>Hours</b>	<b>Weekly rate</b>	<b>Annual</b>	<b>4-week Reimbursement</b>
18 to 23	\$165	\$8,580	\$660
24 to 29	\$170	\$8,840	\$680
30 to 34	\$175	\$9,100	\$700

### **Scholarship Payment Schedule**

This subsection presents the payment schedule first for private early childhood care and education programs and then separately for Head Start programs and public school pre-kindergarten programs.

#### *Private early childhood care and education programs*

Scholarship funds flow directly to ECE programs and include three parts: Advance, Tuition, and Quality Grant.

**Advance:** An upfront payment when child enrolls equal to 2 weeks of the program’s tuition. The Advance can be paid up to 2 weeks in advance of the start of a child’s participation in the ECE program. The Advance serves as a deposit to cover the last 2 weeks of a child’s tuition at the ECE program.<sup>17</sup>

**Tuition:** Every 4 weeks the Scholarship Program pays the ECE program the same tuition the ECE program charges private pay parents minus CCAP payments made on behalf of the family to the ECE program. For a child on CCAP, the Tuition payment covers the gap between the CCAP payments and full tuition (including family co-payment and absent day charges).<sup>18</sup>

**Quality Grant:** Every 12 weeks (and for the fourth payment period in the year 16 weeks) the Scholarship Program pays the ECE program a Quality Grant to enhance and maintain quality. Quality Grants are made based on the aggregate number of scholarship children enrolled at an ECE program. The formula used to calculate the Quality Grant is as follows.

$$\begin{aligned}
 & (4\text{-week reimbursement rate}) * (\# \text{ of } 4\text{-week blocks}^{19} \text{ of scholarship children served}) \\
 & - \text{Tuition payments and CCAP payments received} \\
 & = \text{Quality Grant}
 \end{aligned}$$

#### *Head Start and public school-based programs*

Payments to Head Start centers and public school-based programs will follow the same schedule and rates as payments to private ECE programs. The Advance and Tuition payments to Head

<sup>17</sup> If the child is eligible for CCAP payments, the final two weeks can’t be billed for CCAP reimbursement since it is paid for with the Advance.

<sup>18</sup> For administrative simplicity, the Pilot would make payments every 4 weeks. If a child started during the previous 4 week period, the Tuition payment would be reduced accordingly.

<sup>19</sup> If the program has weeks that do not divide evenly into four week blocks, then the fraction should be added on to the number of four week blocks (i.e., five weeks served = 1.25, 10 weeks served = 2.5, etc.).

Start centers and public school-based programs will equal the maximum amount available minus CCAP payments since neither organization in general charges parents for services (although some School Readiness programs might charge a parent fee). This also means a Quality Grant will not be paid to these programs since the Advance and the 4-week reimbursement Tuition payment will equal the total scholarship amount.

### *Reporting requirements*

Because Head Start centers and public school-based programs receive public funds to pay for operating costs and they are not backed out of the scholarship amount as they are for CCAP payments, both Head Start and public school-based programs are required to submit a Program Plan and a Year-End Report. (Private ECE programs are not required to submit these reports for the Scholarship Program.) The Program Plan is designed to show how these programs will use scholarship funds received that are above private pay tuition based on the number of children enrolled. The Program Plan deadline can be set after ECE programs begin providing services to children with scholarships.

#### 1. Program Plan

Head Start and Public School-Based programs are required to complete a Program Plan based on different levels of potential enrollment. The three categories of acceptable expenditure beyond private pay tuition include:

- *Expand the number of children to whom services are provided.*
- *Increase duration of services provided.* Here the ECE program could expand the amount of time children are served.
- *Increase current quality levels.* Quality improvements include staff training, curricula, infrastructure

#### Principles:

- Scholarship funds can benefit children who don't have scholarships; that is, the funds don't have to be targeted only to children with scholarships.
- Scholarship funds must be spent in the current fiscal year, but can pay for improvements that will benefit children in subsequent years.
- Scholarship funds must first be used to cover any parent fees or charges.

#### Review:

- A Review Team that includes members the Implementation Team and MELF reviews the Program Plans and offers feedback to ECE programs..

#### 2. Year-end Report

At the end of each program year, ECE programs are required to submit a 2 to 3 page report on how scholarship funds were used in the following three areas:

- *Expand the number of children to whom services are provided.* How many children were provided services due to the scholarship funds compared with the number of children provided services if the ECE program didn't receive scholarship funds)?

- *Increase duration of services provided.* How many children received a longer duration of services due to the scholarship funds and for how much longer?
- *Increase current quality levels.* How much funds were used to support quality levels and which quality supports did the funds finance?

This report will be developed in cooperation with SRI to reduce duplication in data collection.

#### Review

- The Review Team reviews the Final Report and offers feedback to ECE programs.

#### **ECE Collaboration Programs**

ECE programs can work together to provide a full-day option for families. For example, a half-day preschool program may collaborate with a child care program to offer full-day services to a family. Both of the programs must have a 3- or 4-star or provisional rating on Parent Aware. Each collaboration program must offer a minimum of 12 hours/week to the child. The two programs must complete the Collaboration ECE Program Application and submit it to RCC in order to establish a payment schedule. The two programs must indicate on the Collaboration ECE Program Application how the total payments are to be split between the two programs and the fee schedule both ECE programs would charge private pay families for the same services provided.

Attendance records and payments are submitted to RCC by each program separately. RCC writes two checks, one for each of the programs based on how the funds are split between the two programs (as indicated on the Collaboration ECE Program Application). The ECE program's private pay fee schedule is used to account for CCAP payments and determine Quality Grant amounts.

Here are the steps two programs should take to offer a collaboration program:

1. Select days and hours the collaboration program is offered.
2. Determine whether the collaboration program will provide transportation between the two programs. Scholarship funds can be used for transportation.
3. Determine how funds will be split between the two programs. For example, if the collaboration program offers 40 hours per week total, the two programs must determine how to divide the \$1,000 4-week payment. Two programs could divide the total amount between the programs based on the proportional number of hours each program provides, the private pay fees one or both of the programs charge, and/or the cost of services the programs agree to pay for (such as transportation). The programs indicate on the ECE Program Collaboration Application how to divide payments between the two programs.

RCC provides information to the City of St. Paul about collaboration ECE programs. The City of St. Paul publishes a complete list of available collaboration ECE programs on its Web site. In addition, RCC includes collaboration ECE programs

*Parent choice limited to one program*

Parents may send their child(ren) to two programs that are not listed as a collaboration, but may use their scholarship funds to pay for only one of those programs. However, as mentioned above, two ECE programs can work together to provide full-day services as a collaboration. Parents and parent mentors can encourage ECE programs to collaborate, but ECE programs must ultimately take the necessary steps to create a collaboration.

### **Child Enrollment Start Dates and Child Move**

*For children currently enrolled in an ECE program*

ECE programs can enroll a child by one of these methods:

1. Provide to RCC a faxed copy of the parent's award letter plus the hours per week the child is attending and if the child is receiving CCAP; or fax to RCC the parent's and child's names, the hours per week the child is attending and indicate if the child is receiving CCAP,
2. E-mail RCC the parent's and child's names, the hours per week the child is attending, and if the child is receiving CCAP, or
3. Call RCC; however a fax or e-mail with the above information must be sent to RCC within two weeks. Payment will not be released until RCC receives documentation.

The payment start date will be the date of the fax, e-mail or phone call, provided the ECE program has signed a Program Agreement Form. If an ECE program has not signed a Program Agreement Form, the start date will be delayed until the ECE program has submitted a Program Agreement Form. The Advance will be sent within 2 weeks of the start date. Note that scholarship payments do not apply to fees charged or costs of service incurred prior to this date.

*For children with a future start date*

ECE programs can enroll a child by one of these methods:

1. Provide to RCC a faxed copy of the parent's award letter plus the hours per week the child will attend, the child's projected start date, and if the child is expected to receive CCAP; or fax to RCC the parent's and child's names, the hours per week the child will attend, projected start date, and indicate if the child is expected to receive CCAP,
2. E-mail RCC the parent's and child's names, hours per week the child will attend, projected start date, and if the child is expected to receive CCAP, or
3. Call RCC; however a fax or e-mail with the above information must be sent to RCC within two weeks. Payment will not be released until RCC receives documentation.

The payment start date will be the date of the fax, e-mail, phone call, or child's actual start date, whichever is later provided the ECE program has signed a Program Agreement Form. If an ECE program has not signed a Program Agreement Form, the start date will be delayed until the ECE program has submitted a Program Agreement Form. The Advance will be sent within 2 weeks of the start date indicated by the ECE program. Scholarship Tuition payments will begin after the child starts attending the ECE program, as indicated on the claim form ECE programs submit to RCC every four weeks.

*ECE programs that charge higher fees than scholarship payments*

ECE programs that charge higher fees than scholarship payments can charge parents for the difference. However, ECE programs must inform parents about the cost before they enroll in the ECE program.

### *Child move from an ECE program*

ECE programs receive a 2 weeks notice before scholarship funding is terminated due to a **child move**. The 2 weeks of service is covered by the Advance. A child move is established on the following conditions:

- Family provides written notice to ECE program or RCC.
- Parent mentor informs ECE program or RCC. (RCC confirms with family)
- A social service agency informs ECE program or RCC. (RCC confirms with family)
- Consistent absence from ECE program. ECE program and parent mentor will work with the family to improve attendance, but at some point, on a case by case basis, RCC will determine the date when a child's scholarship has ended and the child is no longer enrolled at the ECE program.

### **Recruitment and Communication with ECE Programs**

The Implementation Team has proposed a number of strategies to recruit ECE programs to participate in the Scholarship Program and for ongoing communication. Marketing and communication will work in conjunction with the Parent Aware pilot team, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network, and RCC. Some strategies include:

- News and forms on websites of the MELF, City of Saint Paul, Resources for Child Caring, and the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network
- Joint Parent Aware and Scholarship kick-off event for ECE programs in July 2007
- Brochure for ECE programs
- Site visits to eligible ECE programs (see Family Recruitment, above)
- Outreach to community leaders
- Informational community events for ECE programs about Parent Aware

### **Administration of Scholarships**

This section presents a number of administrative tasks regarding the scholarships that will largely be conducted by RCC.

### *Implement recruitment and communication strategies with ECE programs*

These strategies will be coordinated by the City of Saint Paul, Parent Aware, and RCC.

### *Administer contracts and payments with ECE programs*

ECE programs sign a contract to participate in the Scholarship Program. (see Appendix L.) ECE programs agree to the following:

- Declare whether program is half-day (12 to 14 hours or 15 to 17 hours) or full-day (at least 35 hours per week)
- Maintain and provide Scholarship Program daily attendance records every 4 weeks
- Maintain and provide Scholarship Program CCAP reimbursement records every 4 weeks
- Maintain approval status through the Parent Aware
- Provide specified child information to parent mentor as needed

- The MELF reserves the right to review financial records relevant to the Scholarship payments

RCC agrees to the following: (See Appendix L)

- Make Advance, Tuition and Quality Grant payments as outlined above
- Provide at least two weeks notice before a child leaves the program and payment ends

RCC developed a payment mechanism for calculating payments to ECE programs and delivering funds. The payment calculation requires an application that converts child enrollment data and program tuition rates into Advance, Tuition, and Quality Grant payments. Payments may be set up for electronic direct deposit transfer. The Scholarship Program is also responsible for determining a child move.

## Definition of Terms

**approval status:** reached when ECE program achieves a Parent Aware rating of 3 or 4; or provisional rating from the Minnesota Department of Education or Minnesota Department of Human Services.

**child move:** the day Scholarship Program determines a child will be or is no longer enrolled at an ECE program.

**City of Saint Paul** – Mayor Coleman’s office is responsible for providing overall coordination of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program.

**ECE program:** includes private or non-profit child care centers, licensed family child care programs, private or non-profit preschools, Saint Paul school-based programs and Head Start programs.

**national accreditation:** An ECE program accredited through an accrediting body included in rate differential statute.

**Parent Aware:** Provides ratings of early child care and education programs and also provides resources to programs to improve quality. The 3-year pilot of the Parent Aware Rating Tool will include licensed child care providers/early educators in five locations: Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties, the City of Saint Paul, neighborhoods of North Minneapolis and the Wayzata School District. Accredited programs in the 7-county metro area may apply to be included in Parent Aware. <http://www.parentawareratings.org>

**Resources for Child Caring (RCC):** Organization responsible for determining family eligibility, child moves from ECE programs and administering payments to ECE programs.

**Saint Paul-Ramsey County Department of Public Health:** Organization responsible for administering the parent mentoring,, including contracting with existing parent mentoring organizations, assessing families and referring families to these organizations for parent mentoring services.

**Scholarship Program:** refers to the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Pilot project or administration.

**SRI:** Organization evaluating the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program.



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