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Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Evaluation Annual Report: Year 3

SRI Project 18280

Submitted to

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Executive Summary



This is the third annual report on the evaluation of the pilot of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program. The report begins with an overview of the scholarship model and the evaluation questions the report addresses. Next, we present Year 3 findings about the enrollment and participation of children and families, the characteristics of participating children and families, children's developmental outcomes, the ECE programs and the pilot community, and programs' costs and uses of the scholarship funds.

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

- How have the three scholarship program interventions been implemented (i.e., parent mentoring¹, receipt of scholarship funds and attendance in high-quality early childhood education [ECE] programs, and participation in the Parent Aware program rating system)?
- How does the development of scholarship participants compare to expected development for children their age?
- What are the costs associated with providing a high-quality early education experience to young children?
- How did the programs that were receiving scholarship funds use the funds?

Families Participating in the Scholarship Program: Key Findings

Approximately 650 children participated in parent mentoring and/or received scholarships throughout implementation. A total of 449 children were eligible to use their scholarship funds between 2008 and 2010, and 348 of them were enrolled in an ECE program using their scholarship funds during this period. The outcome evaluation includes 257 of the 449 children who will attend up to 2 years of a high-quality ECE program and entered kindergarten in 2010 or will enter kindergarten in 2011 and whose parents consented to participate in the evaluation.

- Many children are English language learners. A little over half of the families reported that their primary home language was English (56%), with Karen (13%) and Hmong (9%) being the next most common home languages.
- An ethnically diverse group of children are participating in the scholarship program. Of those reporting ethnicity on the application forms, 21% of parents identified their children as African-American and 18% of parents identified their children as Asian.
- About three-fourths of the families (72%) had household incomes below 100% of Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG); the incomes of the remainder were between 100 and 185% FPG.

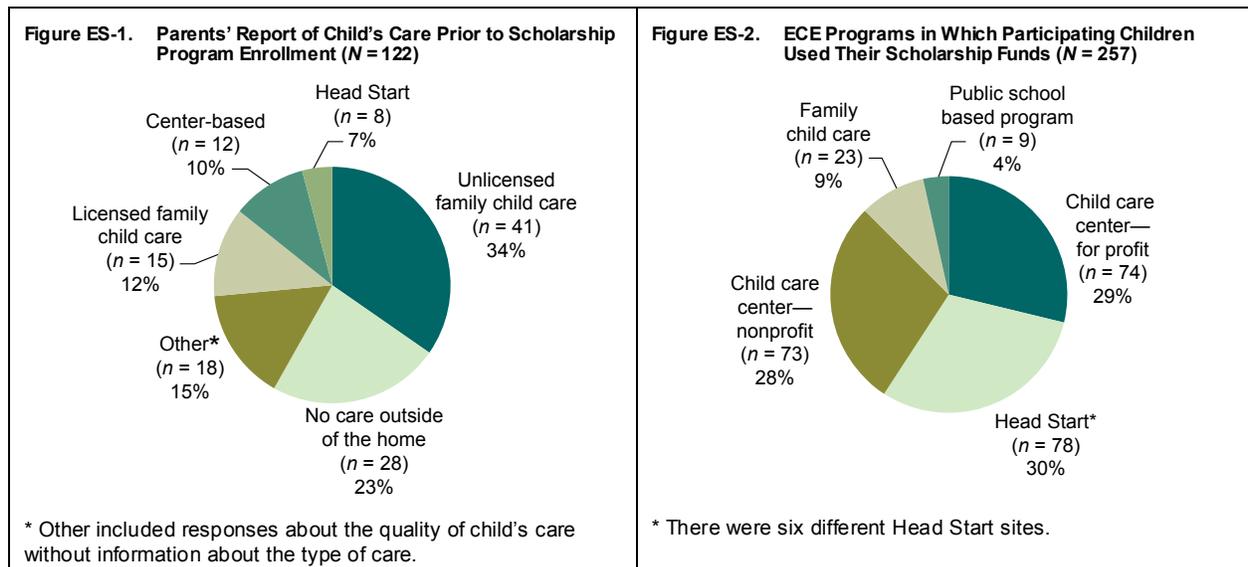
¹ Data on parent mentoring were described in the Year 2 Annual Report (2010).

- About half of the families (48%) were receiving financial assistance from Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), and almost one-fifth (17%) were receiving assistance from Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) at the time the application form was completed.

High-Quality ECE Programs Selected by Participating Families: Key Findings

The Scholarship Program provided increased access to high-quality ECE programs for participating children.

- Prior to receiving a scholarship, the majority of children were being cared for in unlicensed care (57%), either by family members in the child’s home or in unlicensed care in another’s home (Figure ES-1).
- After receiving a scholarship, all children were attending a variety of high-quality ECE programs in and around the pilot area (Figure ES-2).
 - One-third of the children (30%) were using their scholarship funds to attend a Head Start program, and over half (57%) were using their scholarship funds to attend a center-based ECE program.
 - A small percentage of children (9%) were using their scholarship funds at a family child care program, and 4% of the children attended a public school-based program.
- The most common reason for selecting an ECE program reported by parents was quality (34%). Parents ranked the quality of the program higher than either location or cost of the program.

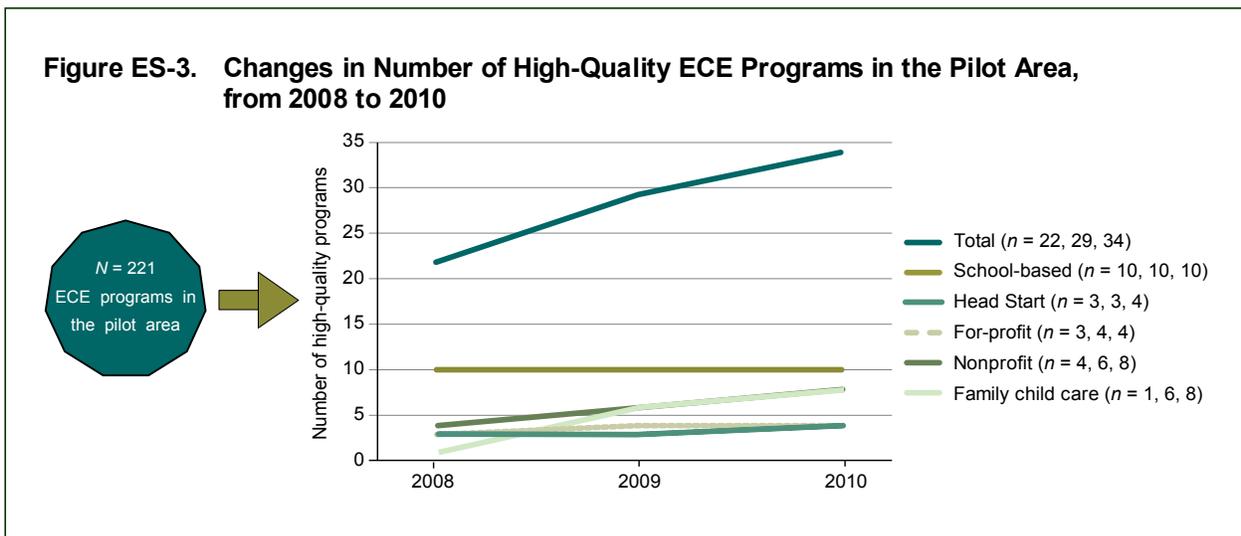


ECE Program Supply and Quality in the Pilot Communities: Key Findings

Data showing ECE programs' participation in Parent Aware provide a window into the market forces that are operating in the scholarship model pilot area. Overall, high-quality ECE program supply increased over the first 2 years of the scholarship program implementation, with family child care programs increasing the most.

Figure ES-3 shows a summary of changes in supply including the following:

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



Impact of Scholarship Program on Children’s Development and Learning: Key Findings

- Children participating in the Scholarship Program showed significant increases in language and early math skills across the first year of enrollment in a high-quality ECE program; and their developmental trajectories are different than they would be without participating in the intervention and attending a high-quality ECE program (i.e., moving closer to age-expected performance). Specifically, children’s scores on the measure of language (receptive vocabulary) showed a significant increase of 5 points after one year of participation in a high-quality ECE program. A gain of 5 points is equivalent to an effect size of .33, considered to be a moderate effect size.
- The findings also show significant improvement in children’s social skills between baseline and one year later. There were no significant changes on average after one year for scores on behavior problems (i.e., anger-aggression) or attention and task persistence. However, there was a trend for slightly fewer children to have below average scores on the attention and task persistence ratings by teachers.
- In addition to these findings, a larger percentage of children passed the English screener at the one-year follow-up assessment compared to baseline.

Costs Associated with Providing a High-Quality Early Education Experience to Young Children: Key Findings

The costs associated with providing a high-quality ECE experience varied widely from site to site, with Head Start and public school-based centers having the highest annual cost and hourly costs per child. RAND attributes these differences at least partially to the increased number of non-teacher staff available at Head Start and public school-based centers. Of the sampled sites, revenue sources also varied widely, but overall, at least half of the students served by the sites were low-income, which is consistent with the finding that most of the sites relied heavily on scholarships, donations and funds other than parent fees to support their programs.

Perceptions of ECE Programs and Use of Scholarship Funds: Key Findings

Programs used the scholarship funds in multiple ways, but primary uses included increasing enrollment and improving quality: enrolling children from low income homes (55%), extending hours (27%), and improving program quality (15%). In addition, 26% of programs noted that the scholarship funds supported children being able to stay enrolled in high-quality programs even as family circumstances or income changed. Quality grant funds, in particular, were often allocated to expanding access for low income children or quality-improvement measures, such as improving the learning environment (58%), purchasing curriculum and assessment tools (33%), and covering the tuition for non-scholarship children (21%).

The Annual Report ends with a summary of the next steps in the evaluation, including plans for the final year of data collection on children and their families.

Introduction



This is the third annual report on the evaluation of the pilot of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program. The purpose of the 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 childhood education programs, and the targeted community (i.e., the targeted pilot areas in Saint Paul, Minnesota). It is a cumulative report but primarily covers the period from January 2010 to December 2010, the third full year of the program. The report has both process and outcome components. Activities during the year included the following:

- Following both cohorts of children and families through evaluation activities
- Following the first cohort of children into kindergarten and conducting assessments of their developmental progress
- Following the second cohort of children into their second year of attending an early childhood education (ECE) program
- Continuing to track implementation of Parent Aware and the supply of early education programs and slots in and near districts 6 and 7 in Saint Paul
- Continuing to monitor the implementation of the scholarship program (e.g., procedures, successes, challenges)
- Assisting RAND in completing the cost study of a subset of 12 ECE programs
- Conducting a survey of all programs receiving scholarship funds

The report begins with an overview of the scholarship model and the evaluation questions the report addresses. Next, we present Year 3 findings about the enrollment and participation of children and families, the characteristics of participating children and families, children's developmental outcomes, the ECE programs and the pilot community, and programs' costs and uses of the scholarship funds. The report ends with a description of the next steps in the evaluation.

Overview of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Model



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 (Grunewald & Rolnick, 2006; Rolnick & Grunewald, 2003). 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 the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (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.** Parents benefit from an array of information that can help them make good choices about how best to support their children's early learning and school readiness. If parents who are low-income 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).

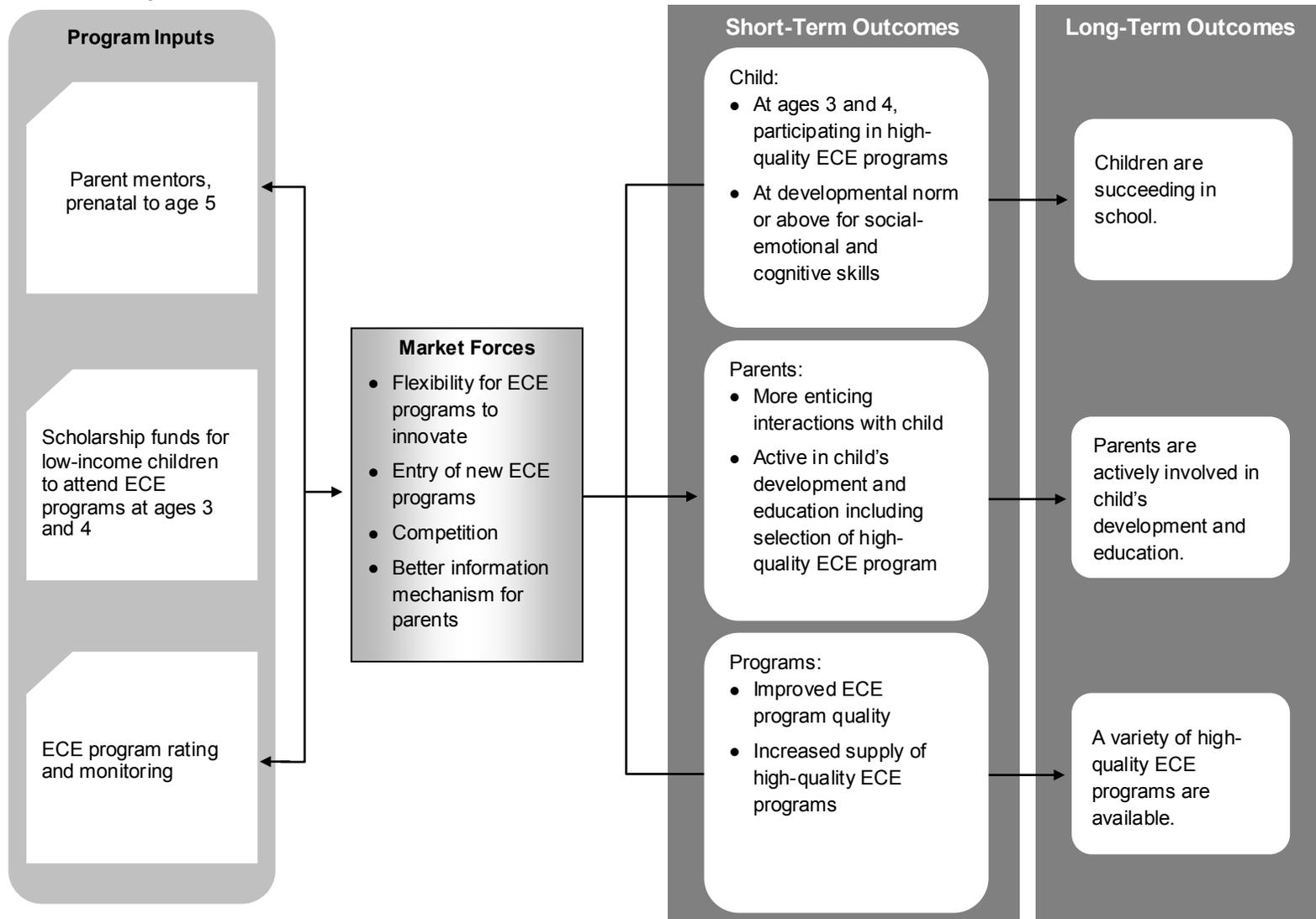
Figure 1 shows the logic model of the scholarship program designed by its developers. The model has three major interventions, shown as Program Inputs that map on to the three principles described above.

- **Parent Mentoring**² 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,³ to rate and monitor ECE program quality
 - A rating system leads to increased accountability. ECE programs are accountable for producing positive results (e.g., getting children ready to be successful in school).

² Parent mentoring services ended June 30, 2009, due to budget constraints.

³ For detailed information about Parent Aware, go to its website at <http://www.parentawareratings.org/>.

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



Note. ECE = Early Childhood Education.

Evaluation

Evaluation Questions

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.

- How have the three scholarship program interventions shown as Program Inputs been implemented (i.e., parent mentoring, receipt of scholarship funds and attendance in high-quality ECE programs, and program participation in the Parent Aware program rating system)?⁴
 - Who are the children, families, and programs participating in the Scholarship Program? What are the demographic and baseline developmental characteristics of children and families (ethnicity, income/SES, mobility, language, employment, etc.)? What factors do families identify that facilitate enrollment and participation in the scholarship program? What factors do families identify that serve as barriers to enrollment and participation in the scholarship program? How many programs did children attend for how many months? Were they attending part-time or full-time?
 - Who participated in the parent mentoring component of the Scholarship Program? How many visits did children and families receive? What activities occurred during the visits and what topics were discussed?⁵
 - Which types of ECE programs are responding to the scholarship program by participating in Parent Aware and by enrolling children with scholarship funds? 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 3 years of implementation? Have new programs entered the market in and near the pilot area?
- In addition to general participation data, we asked the following outcome evaluation questions.
 - How does the development of scholarship participants compare to expected development for children their age? What gains occurred in children's development after 1 year of participating in the Scholarship Program and attending a high-quality ECE program? Do children who participated in the scholarship program enter kindergarten better prepared to be successful in school? Do more children experience improved development, competencies, and skills in dimensions identified by the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP)? These include the following:
 - Health and physical development
 - Emotional well-being and social competence
 - Approaches to learning

⁴ 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).

⁵ This report does not include information on the parent mentoring. All findings related to parent mentoring were included in the Year 2 Annual Report.

- Communication skills (including vocabulary)
- Cognition and general knowledge (including early literacy and math)

In addition, this report will summarize data from the RAND Cost Study and SRI's ECE Program Survey, two studies that were conducted in 2010. These studies answer the following questions:

- What are the costs associated with providing a high-quality early education experience to young children?
- How did the programs that were receiving scholarship funds use the funds?
- Three earlier implementation reports in September 2008, September 2009, and September 2010 are available on the MELF website (www.melf.us). Through site visit interviews with the scholarship implementation team and key stakeholders, we described in the previous reports the successes and challenges of the scholarship program implementation during the first 3 years. This annual report summarizes the information previously reported and continues to provide information about the following process evaluation questions:
 - How is the market forces component of the scholarship logic model working so far?
 - How are scholarship-eligible families choosing ECE programs for their children? Are parents using Parent Aware to inform their decisionmaking in selecting an ECE program for their child?
 - 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?

Sources of Data

The evaluation design included collection of data from multiple sources.

- **Monthly exports.** Resources for Child Caring (RCC) sends monthly or quarterly exports of the status of all children deemed eligible and with consent to participate in the evaluation. The exports include data from the application form and information about the selected ECE program, the ECE start dates, and the child's ECE program attendance.
- **Parent phone interview.** Parents of children participating in the scholarship program were interviewed in Fall 2008, Fall 2009, and Fall 2010. For this report, we used only the baseline interview completed by parents to provide information about the background of children, parents, and families prior to their participation in the Scholarship Program.⁶
- **Direct assessments and teacher completed checklists.** Children were assessed at their selected ECE programs either in the fall of 2008 (when Cohort 2 children were 3 years old) or the fall of 2009 (when Cohort 3 children were 3 years old). These data

⁶ That is, for some children (Cohort 2), data from 2008 are baseline data, while for others (Cohort 3), data from 2009 are baseline data.

provide a baseline for children’s development prior to enrolling in a high-quality ECE program. Children were then assessed one year later at their ECE program (fall of 2009 for Cohort 2 and fall of 2010 for Cohort 3), and these data provided an assessment of children’s developmental progress following 1 year of enrollment in a high-quality ECE program.

- **NACCRRAware.** Data were also collected from NACCRRAware, a web-based public-use dataset available from the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies that provides information about ECE programs and from the **Parent Aware rating website**⁷ that documents the changes in program quality and participation in the pilot areas over time.

Table 1. Scholarship Program Evaluation Questions and Data Sources in 2010

Evaluation Questions	Source
1. Who are the children, families, and programs participating in the Scholarship Program? What are the demographic and baseline developmental characteristics of children and families? How many programs did children attend for how many months? Were they attending part-time or full-time?	Application forms Parent phone interviews RCC monthly export
2. Which types of ECE programs are responding to the scholarship program by participating in Parent Aware and by enrolling children with scholarship funds? 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 3 years of implementation?	NACCRAware Parent Aware website
3. How does the development of scholarship participants compare to expected development for children their age? Do children who participated in the scholarship program enter kindergarten better prepared to be successful in school?	Direct child assessments Parent phone interviews Teacher checklists
4. What are the costs associated with providing a high-quality early education experience for young children?	RAND Cost Study
5. How did the programs that were receiving scholarship funds use the funds?	ECE Program Survey

⁷ Available at <http://www.parentawareratings.org/>.

Year 3 Findings: Participation of Children and Families in the Scholarship Program



Number of Participants in Scholarship Program

The children and families participating in the scholarship program were in five cohorts. Table 2 shows that 1,100 children were projected to participate, and 652 completed an application and were deemed eligible to participate.⁸ The scholarship program provided scholarship funds to 348 (78%) of the 449 children who were age-eligible. These children used their scholarship funds at a high-quality ECE programs beginning in January 2008 through December 2010. An additional 203 children were not eligible (i.e., under 3 years of age) to receive the scholarship funds during the project timeline (and prior to budget cuts in 2009).

Table 2. Number of Participants in Scholarship Program, by Cohort

Cohort	Definition of Group	Projected	Actual	With Consent	Enrolled in ECE Program*
Cohort 1	Early enrollee group, expected to receive about 6 to 18 months of ECE program participation starting 1/1/08	100	129	94	86
Cohort 2**	Eligible to receive scholarship from 9/1/08 for 2 years, enter kindergarten in 2010	300	162	152	133
Cohort 3**	Eligible to receive scholarship from 9/1/09 for 2 years, enter kindergarten in 2011	300	158	139	129
Infant Cohort 1	Receiving parent mentoring, expected to enter ECE programs in fall 2010, receive scholarship for 1 year***	200	101	72	–
Infant Cohort 2	Receiving parent mentoring, eligible to enter ECE programs in fall 2011, no scholarship funds allocated	200	102	68	–
Total		1,100	652	525	348

* Number ever enrolled in ECE program using scholarship funds, consented and nonconsented (i.e., consent for evaluation).

** These are the children who are included in the outcome evaluation.

*** Infant Cohort 1 children were not awarded scholarships in fall 2010 due to budget constraints.

⁸ A total of 268 children in Cohort 3 had completed applications and were deemed eligible by July 2009, but, due to budget cuts, Cohort 3 participation and enrollment were capped at 132.

Thus, three groups (Cohort 1 and the two infant cohorts) were not included in the evaluation. There are 129 children in Cohort 1 who were eligible for a scholarship beginning on January 1, 2008. These children were considered the ramp-up cohort and could 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. At the close of the Cohort 1 enrollment period (September 2009), 86 of these children had enrolled in a Parent Aware-rated ECE program using their scholarship funds at some time during this period (January 2008 to September 2009). Cohort 1 is now closed to enrollment as many of these children have entered kindergarten (and were not included in the outcome evaluation). The 203 children who met eligibility requirements as part of the infant cohorts had approved applications to receive parent mentoring and children in Infant Cohort 1 were set to receive scholarships in 2010 ($N = 101$). Infant Cohort 2 ($N = 102$) only received parent mentoring. Detailed outcome data are not collected for these cohorts of children either. Children in Infant Cohort 1 did not receive scholarships due to the budget cuts.

Throughout the remainder of this report (except where indicated in the parent mentoring section), data are presented for **Cohorts 2 and 3** only because the children in these groups can participate in the outcome evaluation and are expected to have the most in-depth data, including school readiness and kindergarten outcomes, by 2011. Children in Cohorts 2 and 3 were considered fully participating in the scholarship if they were enrolled in an ECE program using their scholarship funds between January 2008 and December 2010.

- **Cohort 2.** There were **162** children 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 2010, 133 of these children had enrolled in a Parent Aware-rated ECE program using their scholarship funds. Nearly all of these families (130 of 133, 98%) consented to participate in the evaluation, and detailed outcome and demographic data were collected for Cohort 2 children beginning in fall 2008.
- **Cohort 3.** There were **158** children eligible to enroll in an ECE program using their scholarship funds beginning September 1, 2009; they also have the potential to receive the maximum scholarship and ECE program attendance (i.e., 2 years) and are expected to enter kindergarten in fall 2011. As of December 2010, 129 children were in this group and had enrolled or were currently enrolled in a Parent Aware-rated ECE program. Most of the participants (127 of 129, 98%) consented to participate in the evaluation and detailed outcome and demographic data were collected for Cohort 3 children beginning in fall 2009.

Figure 2 shows the participation of children in Cohorts 2 and 3.

- In Cohorts 2 and 3, **320** applications for scholarship funds were deemed eligible.⁹
- Of the 320 eligible:
 - **30** families (9%) did not have signed consent to participate in the evaluation.

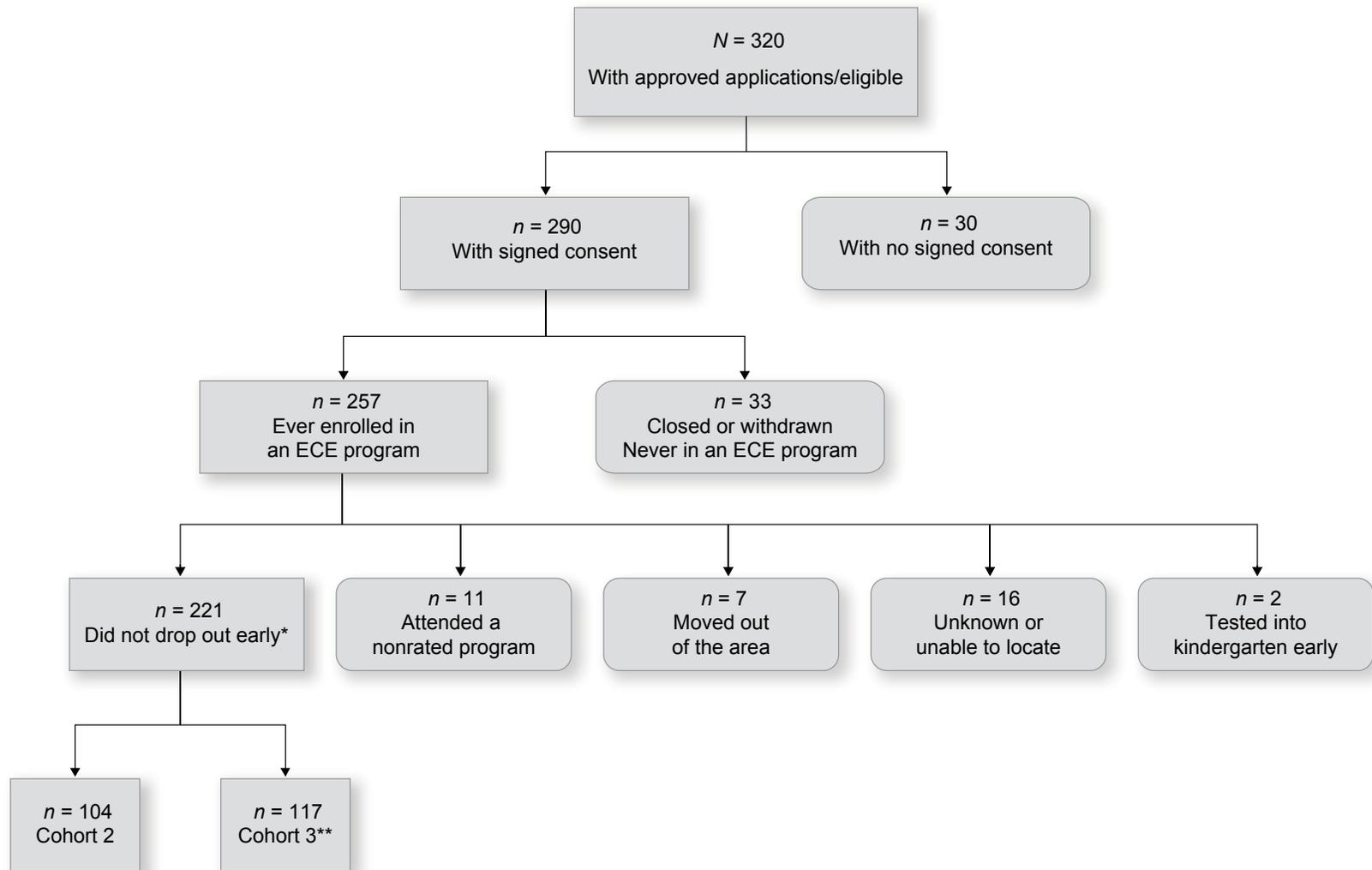
⁹ Data were provided in monthly or quarterly reports from Resources for Child Caring (RCC). These data reflect the data exported to SRI in September 2010.

- Seven of the 30 parents in these families declined to participate in the evaluation. The remaining were not asked to participate or never responded to repeated requests.
- **290** parents (91%) signed consent for their children and families to participate in the evaluation.
 - Some of these children (33, 11%) never enrolled in an ECE program and their files were subsequently closed. These families either moved out of the area or had selected a program but were not able to find transportation to the ECE program, or RCC was unable to find them to determine their status.
- **257** children (88%) with signed consent enrolled in an ECE program during the course of implementation—130 children in Cohort 2 and 127 children in Cohort 3.
 - Cohort 2. 26 of 130 (20%) were closed or withdrew from the Scholarship Program prior to March 2010 (i.e., 6 months before their eligibility ended).
 - Cohort 3. 10 of 127 (8%) were closed or withdrew from the Scholarship Program prior to August 2010.
 - Thus, of those who consented and were ever enrolled in a program, overall attrition was approximately 14% (36 of 257).

Attrition from the Scholarship Program after enrolling in an ECE program occurred for a variety of reasons including ($n = 36$):

- Seven children whose family moved out of the area;
- Two children who tested into kindergarten early;
- Eleven children who attended a nonrated program and thus the scholarship was relinquished by the family.
 - Three of the 11 children who were listed as enrolled in a nonrated program were children who were identified with special needs and attended programs that were not rated by Parent Aware but families reported to RCC staff that the program met the child’s needs (e.g., early childhood special education program in the Saint Paul Public Schools); and
- Sixteen children who were lost to follow-up (i.e., evaluation and/or RCC staff were not able to contact or locate the families).

Figure 2. Number of Children in Cohorts 2 and 3 Participating in the Scholarship Program and Evaluation



* Dropping out early was defined as before March 1, 2010, for Cohort 2 and before August 1, 2010, for Cohort 3 participants.

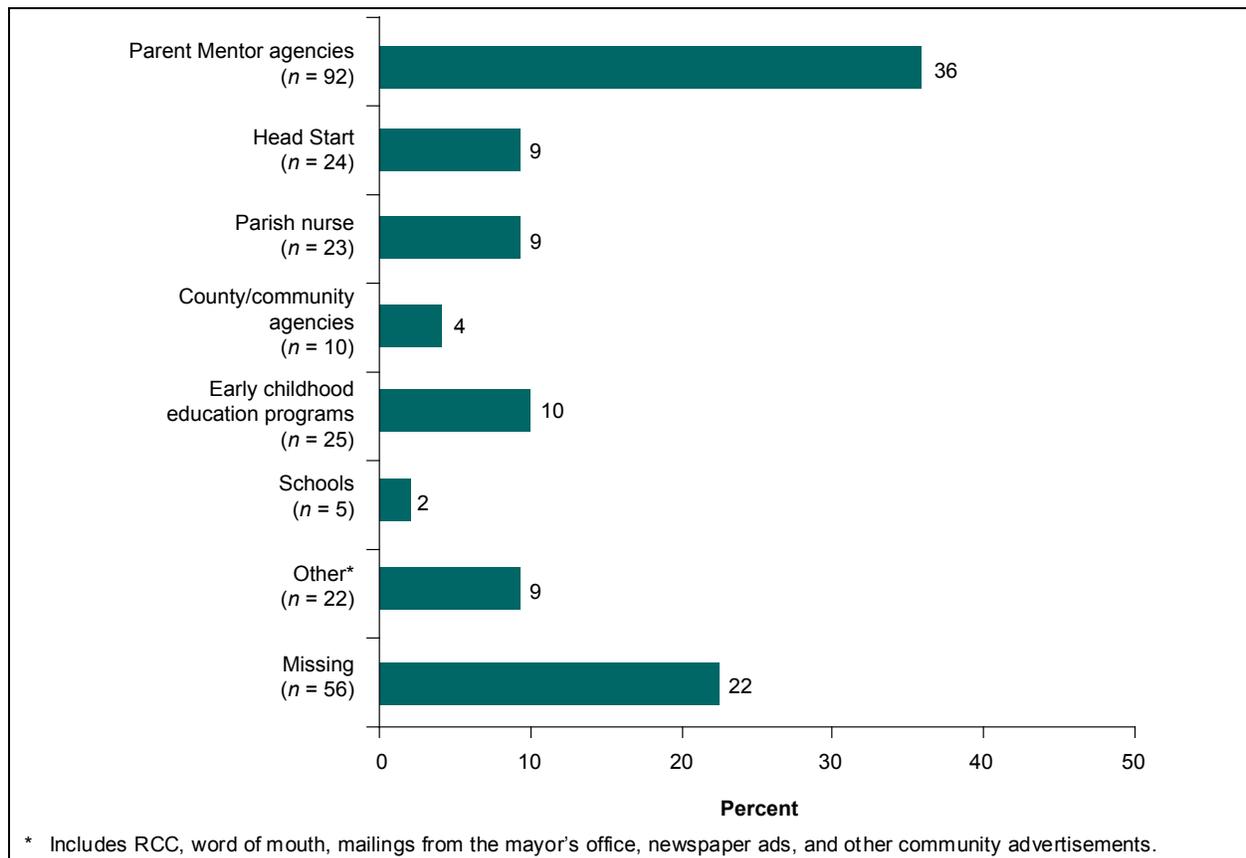
** This number is preliminary since Cohort 3 children have several more months of possible attendance before we know with certainty the final number who left the program before the full 2 years were completed.

Enrollment of Children and Families in Cohorts 2 and 3 in the Scholarship Program

Data from the application forms for the children in Cohorts 2 and 3 indicate that families learned about or were referred to the scholarship program from a variety of sources (Figure 3). These children were defined as participating in the evaluation if their parents had signed an informed consent and they were ever enrolled in an ECE program using their scholarship funds ($N = 257$).

- More than half of the families (57%) reported that they learned about the scholarship program from entities that receive payment from the scholarship program, including the Parent Mentor agencies (36%), Head Start (9%), schools (2%), and other early childhood education programs (10%).
- More than one-eighth of the families (13%) learned about the scholarship program from community agencies (4%) 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 (9%).
- For about one-fifth of the families (22%), the referral source was not reported on the application.

Figure 3. Sources of Referral to the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program, Participating Families with Signed Consent ($N = 257$)



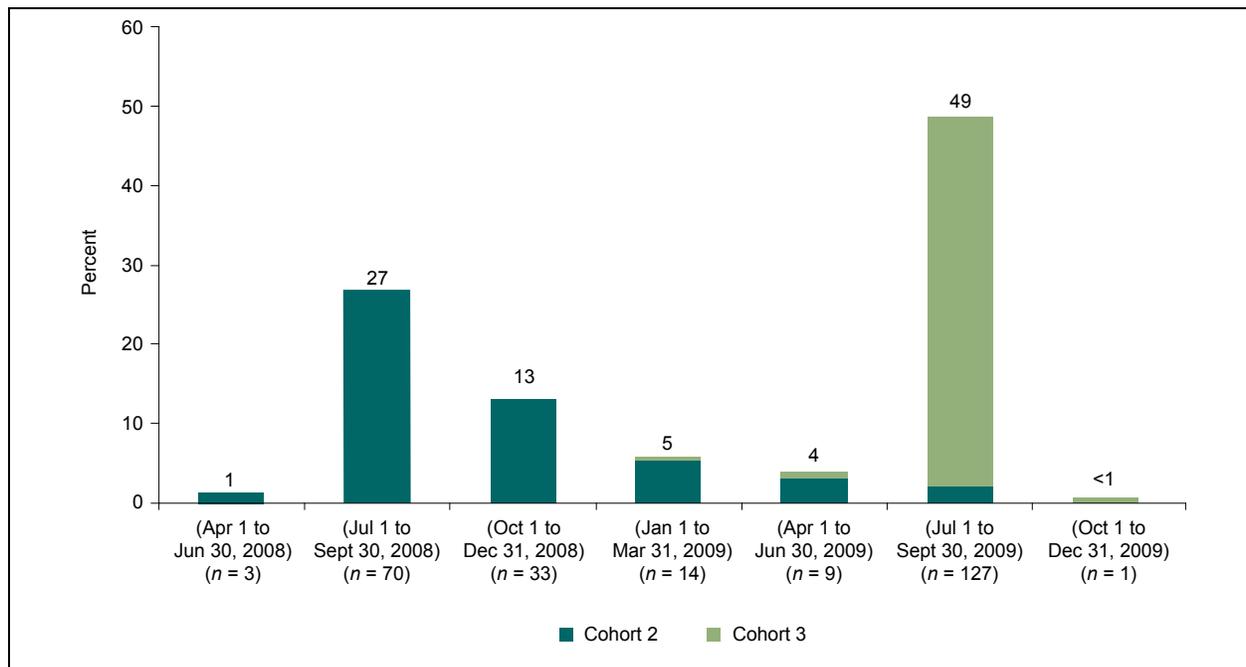
Source: Application forms.

Enrollment of Children in Cohorts 2 and 3 in High-Quality ECE Programs

Figure 4 shows when children began to attend ECE programs using their scholarship funds.

- By the end of 2009, all of the 257 scholarship-eligible children in Cohorts 2 and 3 with consent had enrolled in an ECE program.
 - More than three-fourths of Cohort 2 children (106 of 130, 82%) enrolled by the end of 2008.
 - Nearly all of the Cohort 3 children (123 of 127, 98%) had enrolled between July 1 and September 30, 2009.

Figure 4. Start Dates of Early Childhood Education Program Participation Using Scholarship Funds, Cohorts 2 and 3, Families with Signed Consent (N = 257)



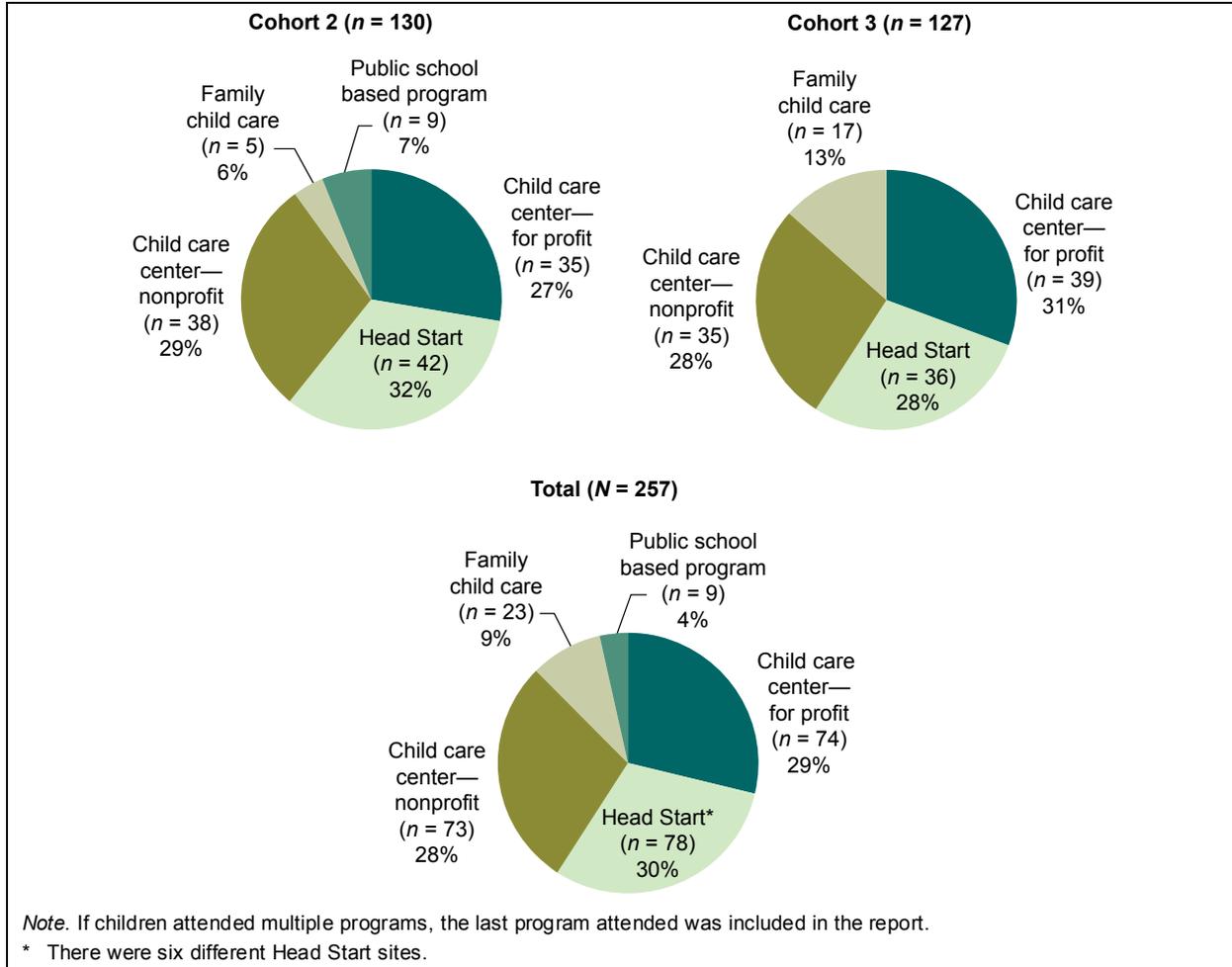
Source: Application forms.

As reported in the Year 2 Annual Report, the children in Cohorts 2 and 3 who had enrolled in an ECE program by December 2009 ($N = 257$) were attending a variety of types of programs (Figure 5).

- Overall, center-based programs (for-profit, Head Start, and nonprofit), enrolled similar percentages of children (29%, 30%, and 28%, respectively), while family child care and public school-based programs attracted fewer children (9% and 4%).
- There were some differences between the types of programs chosen by Cohort 2 and Cohort 3 families.
 - Head Start was the program most often chosen by Cohort 2 families (32%), followed closely by nonprofit center-based programs (29%), and for-profit center-based programs (27%). Cohort 3 families most often chose for-profit center-based programs (31%), followed by Head Start (28%) and nonprofit center-based programs (28%).

- The percentage of Cohort 3 families selecting family child care (13%) was higher compared to Cohort 2 children (6%).
- No Cohort 3 children were enrolled in public school-based programs, compared with 7% of Cohort 2 children. Cohort 3 children, however, were not eligible for public school-based programs unless they were 4 years old.

Figure 5. ECE Programs in Which Participating Children Used Their Scholarship Funds (N = 257)



Source: Application forms.

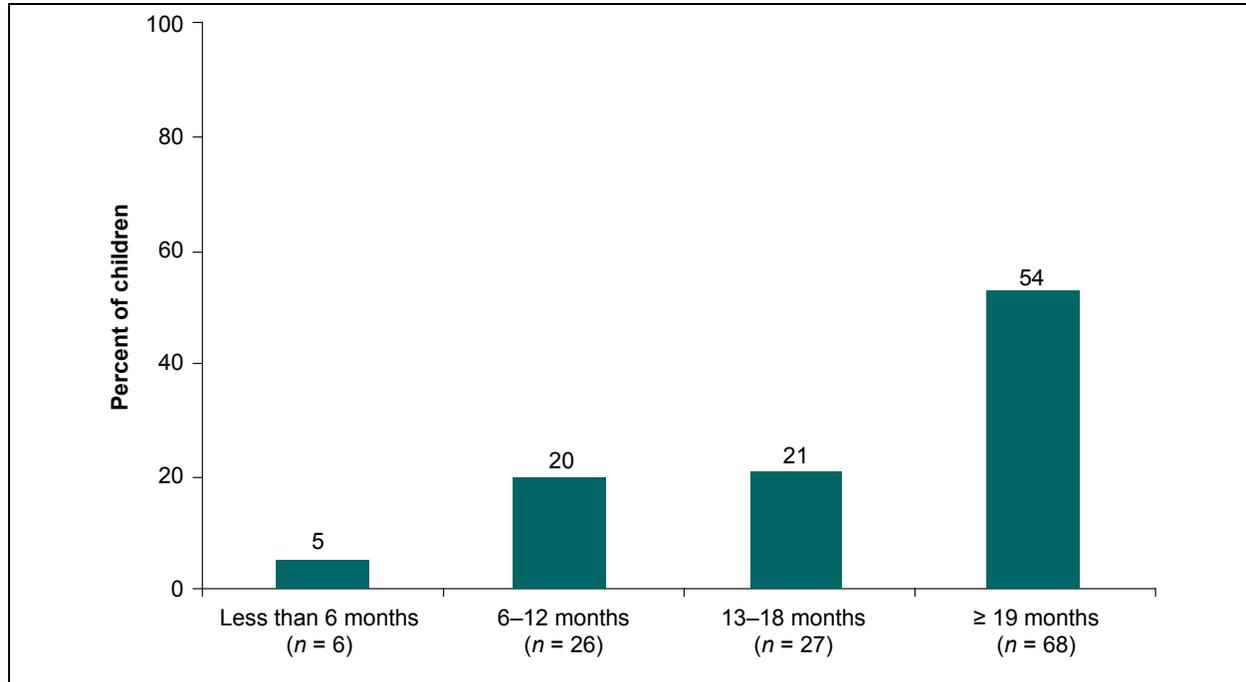
Attendance of Children in High-Quality ECE Programs (Cohort 2 Only)

In Year 3, we also examined the mobility, attendance, and absences of scholarship children. ECE programs reported these data to RCC to document children's enrollment and for programs to receive payment. For this report, we focused on children in Cohort 2 as they had completed their participation in the Scholarship Program (i.e., were kindergarten eligible in fall 2010). Because children and families' circumstances and needs change over time, we wanted to examine how many children were enrolled in one or more programs and the range of time children were enrolled in their programs of choice during the 2 years that children were expected to be enrolled (September 2008 to September 2010).

Information below reflects the 127 children in Cohort 2 with available attendance data.

Mobility and length of participation. Three-fourths of children ($n = 94$, 74%) attended one program and about one-fourth ($n = 33$, 26%) attended 2 or 3 programs during the 2-year period. On average, Cohort 2 children attended a high-quality ECE program using their scholarship funds for 17 months, ranging from less than 6 months ($n = 6$, 5%) to more than 18 months ($n = 68$, 54%) (Figure 6). While there is a debate about whether 1 year or 2 years of a high-quality program is needed for improving school readiness outcomes, the only programs demonstrating permanent gains in children's cognitive development are those where children attend for a sustained period of time (Barnett, 1998; NICHD & Duncan, 2003; NICHD & ECCRN, 2003; Reynolds, 1995; Skibbe, Connor, Morrison, & Jewkes, 2011).

Figure 6. Months Children Attended a High-Quality ECE Program, Cohort 2 Only ($N = 127$)

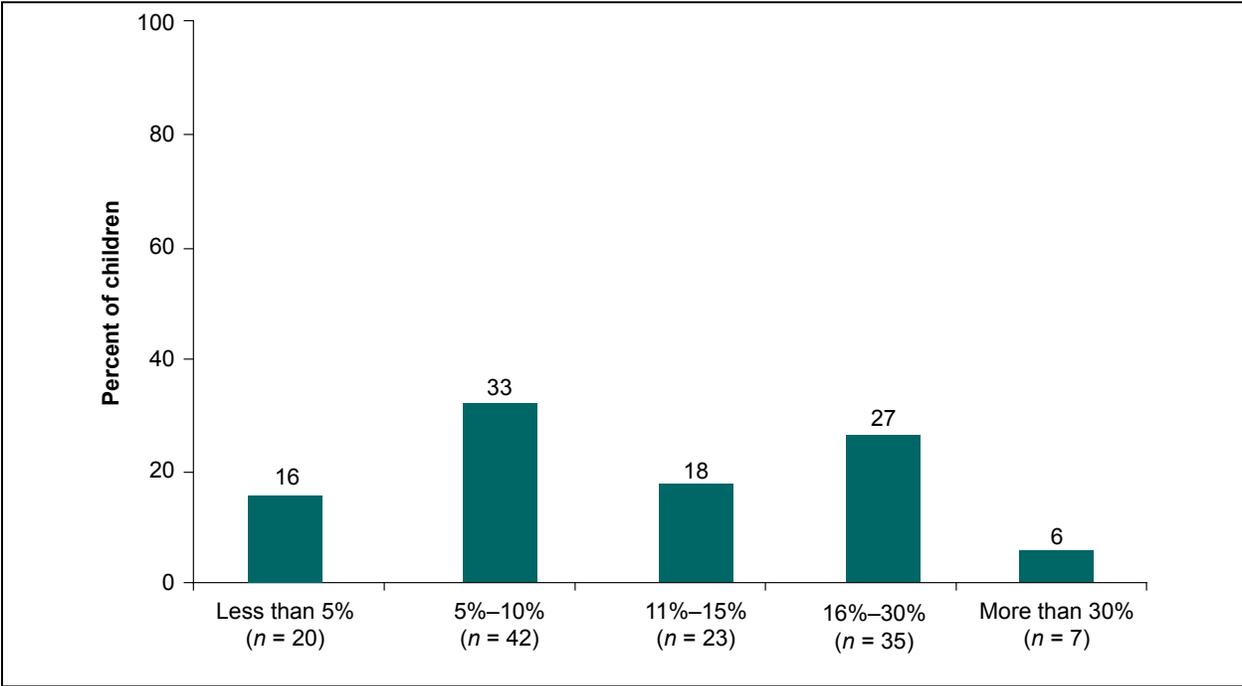


Source: RCC monthly export.

Part-time versus full-time. More than two-thirds of children (69%) attended an ECE program full-time (> 25 hours per week) and 13% of children attended part-time (\leq 25 hours per week). The remainder (18%) changed from part-time to full-time attendance or vice versa either because they changed from a full-time program to a part-time program or reduced/increased their hours at a program. We chose to define full-time programming as greater than 25 hours per week because most studies of child care define full-time programming in this way (Geoffroy et al., 2007). For instance, the Abecedarian preschool program for children from low-income households provided full-day, full-year services (i.e., more than 6 hours a day, 5 days a week, for 50 weeks of the year). To date, there is not enough adequate research to make assertions about the benefit of 20 hours a week versus 25 hours a week, although arguably 20 hours a week of a high-quality ECE program may be better than attending a poor or mediocre quality program for 25 hours per week (Barnett et al., 2007). The Scholarship Program evaluation was not designed to answer this question, but it is interesting to note that most of the families in the Scholarship Program when given the resources to access a full-day program for their children chose to do so.

Attendance and absenteeism. Most children attended over 85% of the days they were enrolled. A small percentage ($n = 7$; 6%) were absent 30% of the days they were enrolled (Figure 7). Surprisingly, very few studies have examined absenteeism in ECE programs for this age range, and there are few available data showing links between absenteeism and child outcomes. One exception is the Infant Health and Development Program (IHDP) which provided home-based and center-based services to a population of low-birth-weight infants over the first 3 years of life and found number of days in center-based care was linked to child outcomes (Liaw, Meisels, & Brooks-Gunn, 1995; Ramey et al., 1992). Specifically, one analysis showed that long-term impacts on children's development were associated with at least 300 to 325 days in the program over a 2-year period (Hill, Brooks-Gunn, & Waldfogel, 2003). In a meta-analysis of state-funded PreK programs, attendance was associated with both short- and long-term outcomes (Gilliam & Zigler, 2000) although most studies do not specify a threshold of attendance. Because of the paucity of studies examining variation in attendance in children from low-income households attending high-quality ECE programs, it is difficult to determine the impact of the scholarship funds on children's attendance and whether there is a threshold of attendance needed to achieve positive outcomes. In one study of children attending Head Start programs, the average attendance rate was 85% in classrooms rated good to high-quality on the ECERS (Hubbs-Tait et al., 2002). These latter data suggest that overall children participating in the Scholarship Program had similar rates of absenteeism.

Figure 7. Absenteeism of Scholarship Participants in ECE Program, Cohort 2 Only (N = 127)



Source: RCC monthly export.

Year 3 Findings: Characteristics of Participating Children and Families



Characteristics of Children and Families in Cohorts 2 and 3

Table 3 shows the demographic characteristics of children and families enrolled in the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program for Cohorts 2 and 3. These data show the following:

- A little over half of the families reported that their primary home language was English (56%), with Karen (13%) and Hmong (9%) being the next most common home languages.
- Ethnicity was not reported on the application forms for nearly half of the families (49%), but for those reporting, the majority of the families were African-American (21%) or Asian (18%).
- Nearly three-fourths of families (72%) had household incomes below 100% federal poverty guidelines (FPG), although eligibility for the program was up to 185% of the FPG.

Other data from the application forms and RCC participation data indicated the following:

- Across all cohorts, nearly two-thirds of the families (64%) have one child participating in the scholarship program, more than one-quarter (28%) have two children participating, and about 7% have three or more children participating.

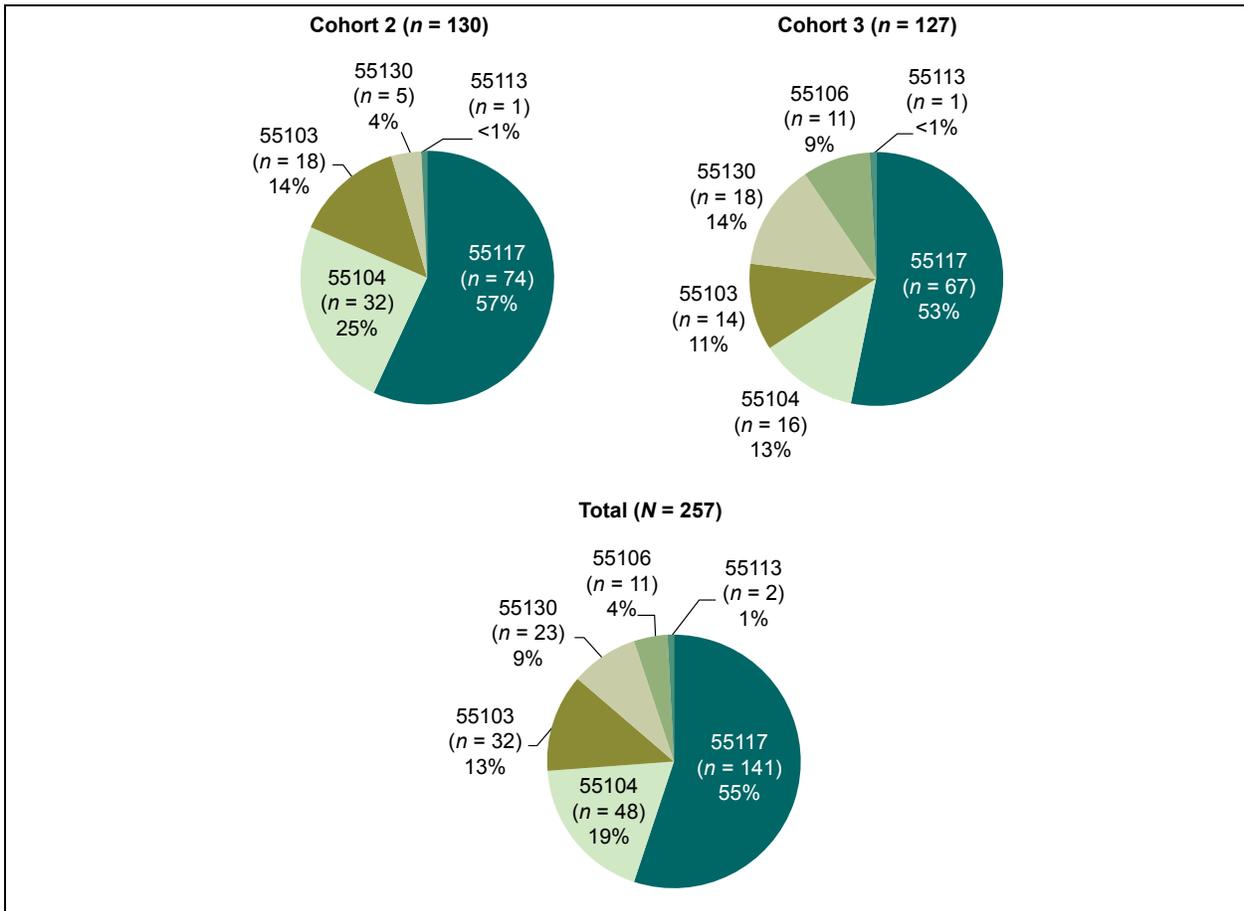
Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Children and Families Enrolled in the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program, with Consent in Cohorts 2 and 3 (N = 257)

	Cohort 2 (n = 130)	Cohort 3 (n = 127)	Total (N = 257)
	n (%)		
Final Status			
Total sample	130 (51)	127 (49)	257 (100)
Primary home language			
English	77 (59)	67 (53)	144 (56)
Spanish	7 (5)	10 (8)	17 (7)
Hmong	13 (10)	9 (7)	22 (9)
Somali	2 (2)	2 (2)	4 (2)
Karen	16 (12)	17 (13)	33 (13)
Other	8 (7)	7 (6)	15 (6)
Missing	7 (5)	15 (12)	22 (9)
Ethnicity			
African-American	39 (30)	14 (11)	53 (21)
Asian	29 (22)	17 (13)	46 (18)
Latino	7 (5)	5 (4)	12 (5)
White	7 (5)	2 (2)	9 (4)
Other	11 (8)	1 (<1)	12 (5)
Missing	37 (28)	88 (69)	125 (49)
Gender			
Male	65 (50)	65 (52)	130 (51)
Female	65 (50)	61 (48)	126 (49)
Household Income			
100–185% FPG	39 (30)	34 (27)	73 (28)
<100% FPG	91 (70)	93 (73)	184 (72)

Source: Application forms.

Families of the children in Cohorts 2 and 3 reside in six zip codes in districts 5, 6, and 7 in Saint Paul (Figure 8). The main difference between cohorts is that eligibility was expanded beginning in September 2009 to include families who live in district 5 or Payne-Phalen (i.e., which includes the 55106 zip code area). Thus, Cohort 3 includes some children from this area of Saint Paul.

Figure 8. Home Zip Code for Families of Children Participating in the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program, Cohorts 2 and 3 (N = 257)

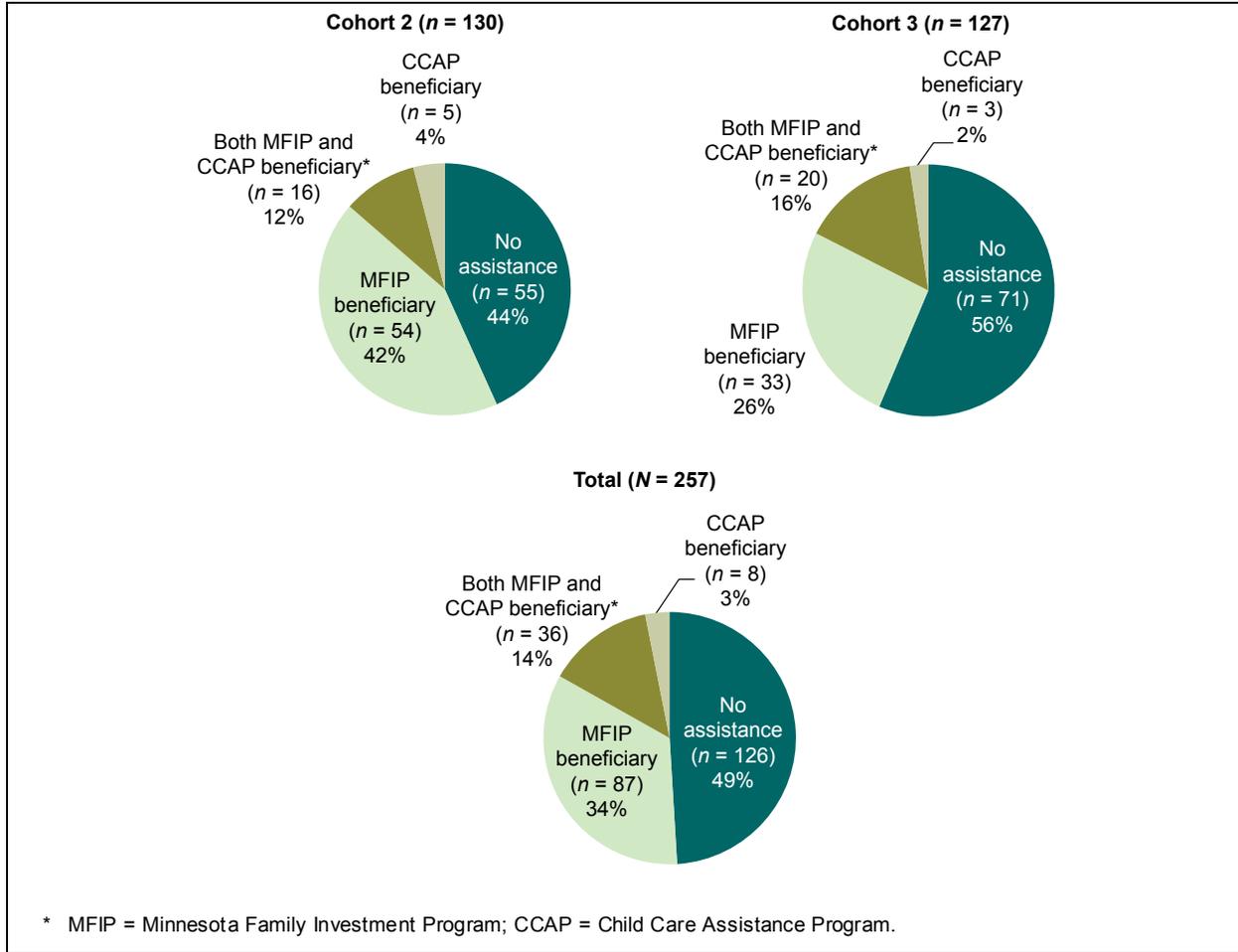


Source: Application forms.

Many of the families in Cohorts 2 and 3 were receiving one or two forms of public assistance at the time the family completed the application to participate in the Scholarship Program (Figure 9).

- About half of families (51%) were receiving financial assistance from either the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), or from both programs.
 - Almost half of the families (48%) were receiving financial assistance from MFIP (MFIP and MFIP plus CCAP).
 - Almost one-fifth (17%) were receiving assistance from CCAP (CCAP and MFIP plus CCAP).
 - Fourteen percent of the families were receiving assistance from both assistance programs (MFIP and CCAP).
 - Families in Cohort 3 were less likely to report MFIP only compared to Cohort 2 and more likely to report no assistance.

Figure 9. Families' Participation Rates in MFIP and CCAP Financial Assistance Programs, Cohorts 2 and 3, Families with Signed Consent (N = 257)



Source: Application forms.

Below we describe information from the parent phone interviews.¹⁰ Of the 257 children, 124 (48%) families completed the baseline phone interview. Data displayed below include only the families that completed the parent phone interview (n = 124, 48%). In these and subsequent data, Cohorts 2 and 3 are combined, except where indicated.¹¹

¹⁰ Because we often did not have the final sample of participants in fall 2008 and fall 2009, SRI attempted to reach as many families as possible even though some of the children in these families never enrolled in an ECE program. Thus, an additional 49 families from Cohorts 2 and 3 were interviewed, but did not participate in the Scholarship Program. In the annual report for Year 2, we reported on the 147 families interviewed at baseline regardless of participation. In this report, we report only parent phone interview data for the families whose children participated in the Scholarship Program.

¹¹ Most of the interview respondents identified themselves as the biological mother (84%) or the biological father (11%). The respondents are identified interchangeably as parents or caregivers throughout the report.

Parents' Perceptions of the Scholarship Program

In the interviews, parents were asked a series of questions about the process of completing the application for the Scholarship Program and enrolling their child in an ECE program.

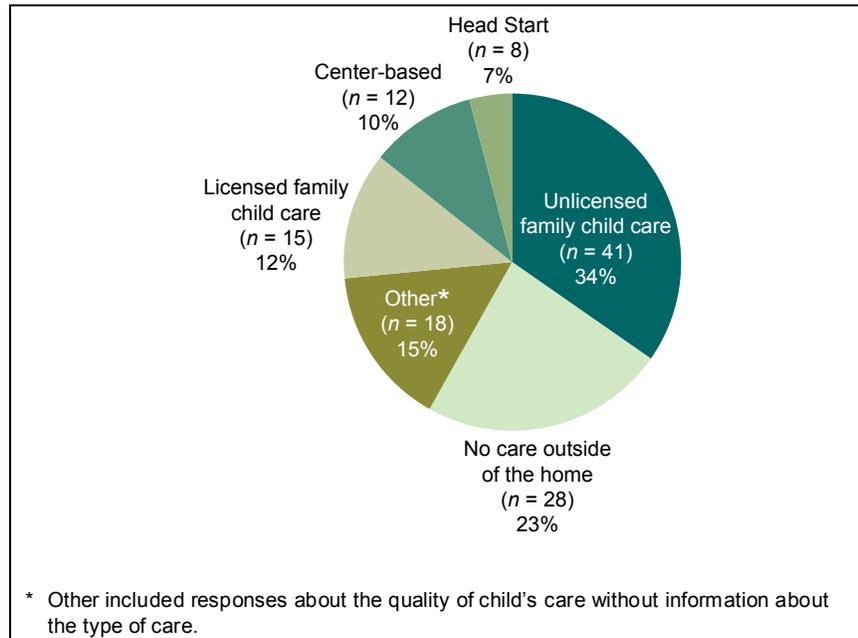
- Most of the parents (86%) felt the application form was easy or somewhat easy to complete.
- Most of the parents (72%) reported that they completed the application by themselves and/or with their spouse or partner.
- Of those parents who received help in completing the application form, 54% reported receiving help from a parent mentor or ECE program staff.

Selecting and enrolling the child in an ECE program was generally an easy process for families.

- The majority of parents (86%) reported that the ECE program selected for their child was their first choice.
- Most of the parents (87%) felt that it was easy or somewhat easy to find an ECE program for their child, but only 57% reported that they or their spouses or partners actually found the ECE program on their own.
 - Of those parents who received help in finding an ECE program, 22% reported receiving help from preschool/ECE program staff, and 41% received help from a public health nurse, home visitor, or parent mentor.
 - The majority (63%) of parents reported that they were able to find an ECE program in which to enroll their child in less than a month; about one-fourth (26%) reported 1 to 3 months to find a program.
 - Once families found an ECE program, almost all of them (91%) reported that the process of enrolling their child in the program was easy or somewhat easy, with most (70%) reporting completing the process by themselves or with a spouse or partner. If they had help in enrolling, caregivers reported that parent mentors (34%) or ECE program staff (31%) helped them.

When asked where the child was being cared for prior to the Scholarship Program (Figure 10), the largest percentage (57%) described unlicensed care in the child's home by a family member or friend (23%) or care in another's home (34%), while 12% reported licensed family child care, 10% center-based program or preschool, and 7% Head Start.

Figure 10. Parents' Report of Child's Care Prior to Scholarship Program Enrollment (N = 122)

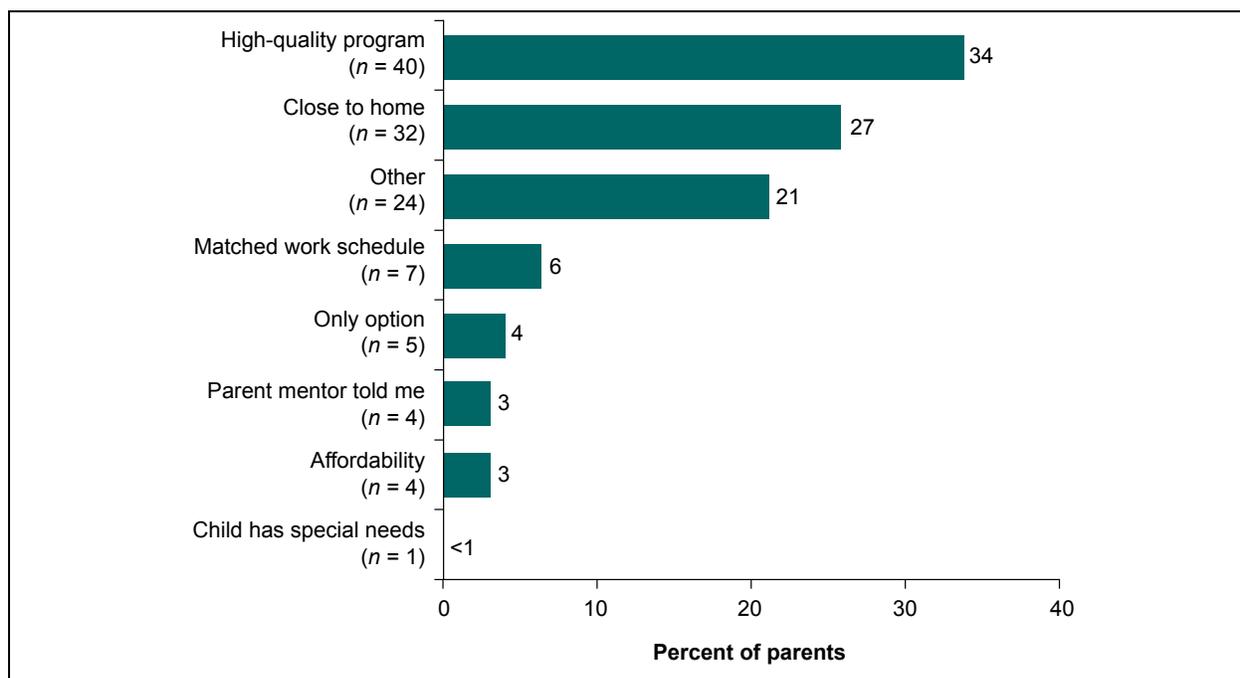


Source: Parent phone interviews.

Parents who completed the phone interview were asked several questions related to their experience in finding a program and participating in the scholarship program.

- Parents heard about the ECE program they selected to use for the scholarship through a variety of ways.
 - About one-fourth of parents (24%) learned about the program through relatives or friends, co-workers, and neighbors.
 - Twelve percent heard about the ECE program through their parent mentor or home visitor.
 - Thirteen percent knew of the program because the program provides care for another child in their family.
 - Very few (3%) knew of the program through Parent Aware or its website, although some parents reported they learned about it through the Internet or advertisements (6%).
- More than one-third of parents (34%) had heard of Parent Aware.
- The main reasons parents reported selecting the ECE program are displayed in Figure 11. The most common reasons parents reported choosing the program were quality (34%) or location (i.e., the program was close to family's home) (27%).
 - In comparison, only 21% of families in the 2004 statewide household child care survey (Chase, Arnold, Schauben, & Shardlow, 2005) chose their child's primary child care arrangement because of quality. More than one-fifth (24%) of the parents in that sample chose the child care arrangement because of location and 20% chose for affordability.

Figure 11. Factors Parents Used to Select ECE Program for the Scholarship Funds (N = 117)

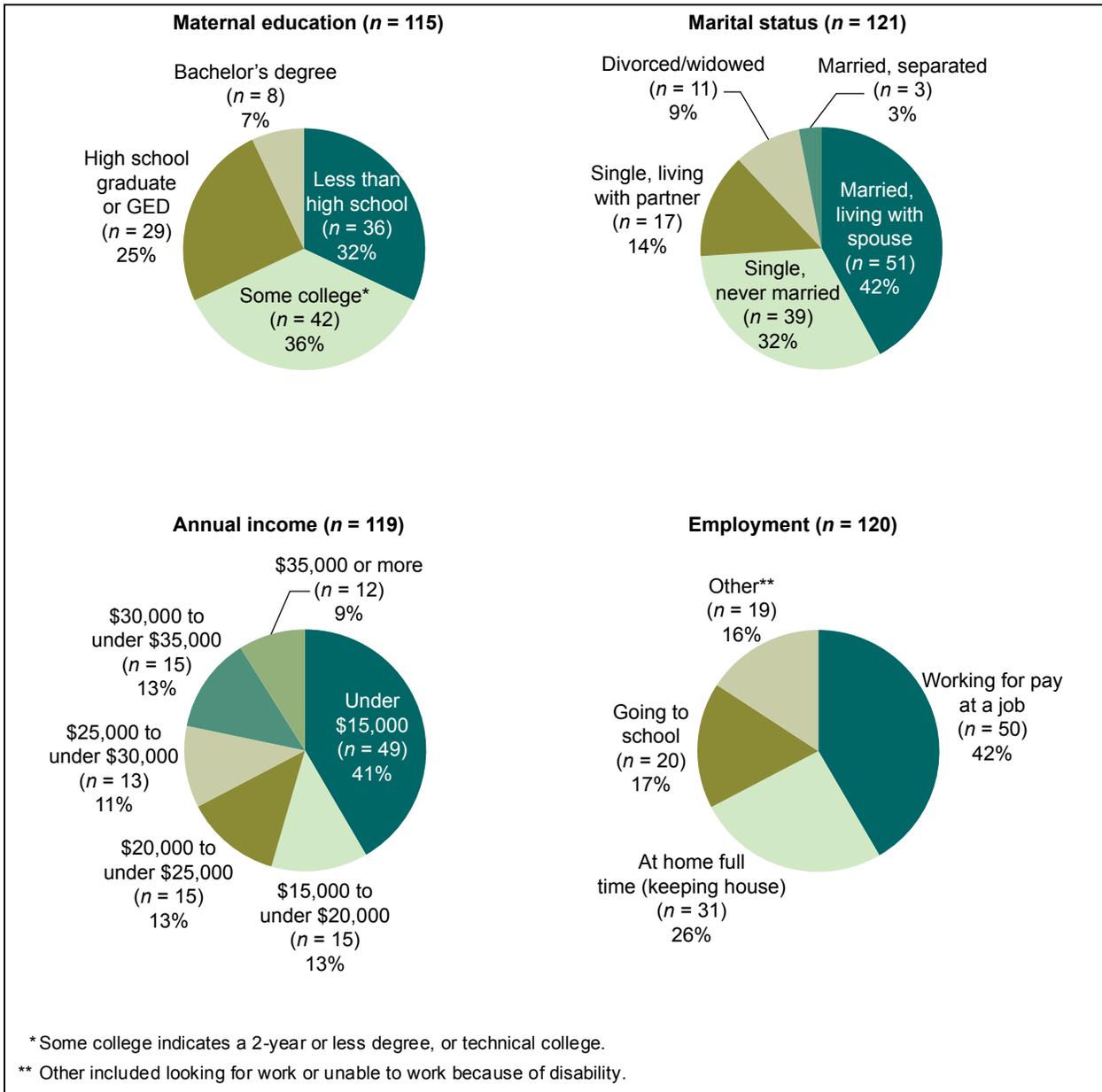


Source: Parent phone interviews.

Some family or child risk factors impact children’s learning, development, and school readiness.

- The educational background of parents completing the phone interview ranged from less than a high school education to a bachelor’s degree and was evenly distributed across these categories (Figure 12). About one-third of the parents had less than a high school education (32%) and one-third (36%) had completed some additional vocational training or college following high school.
- About two-fifths (42%) of the parents were married and living with a spouse at the time of the interview, and one-third (32%) were single and never married.
- About two-fifths (42%) of the parents were working for pay at a job and approximately one-fifth (17%) were going to school.
- Over half (54%) reported having an annual household income below \$20,000.
- Three-fourths (72%) of children see their father or father-figure on a daily basis.

Figure 12. Demographic Characteristics at Baseline of Children and Families Participating in the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program (N = 124)

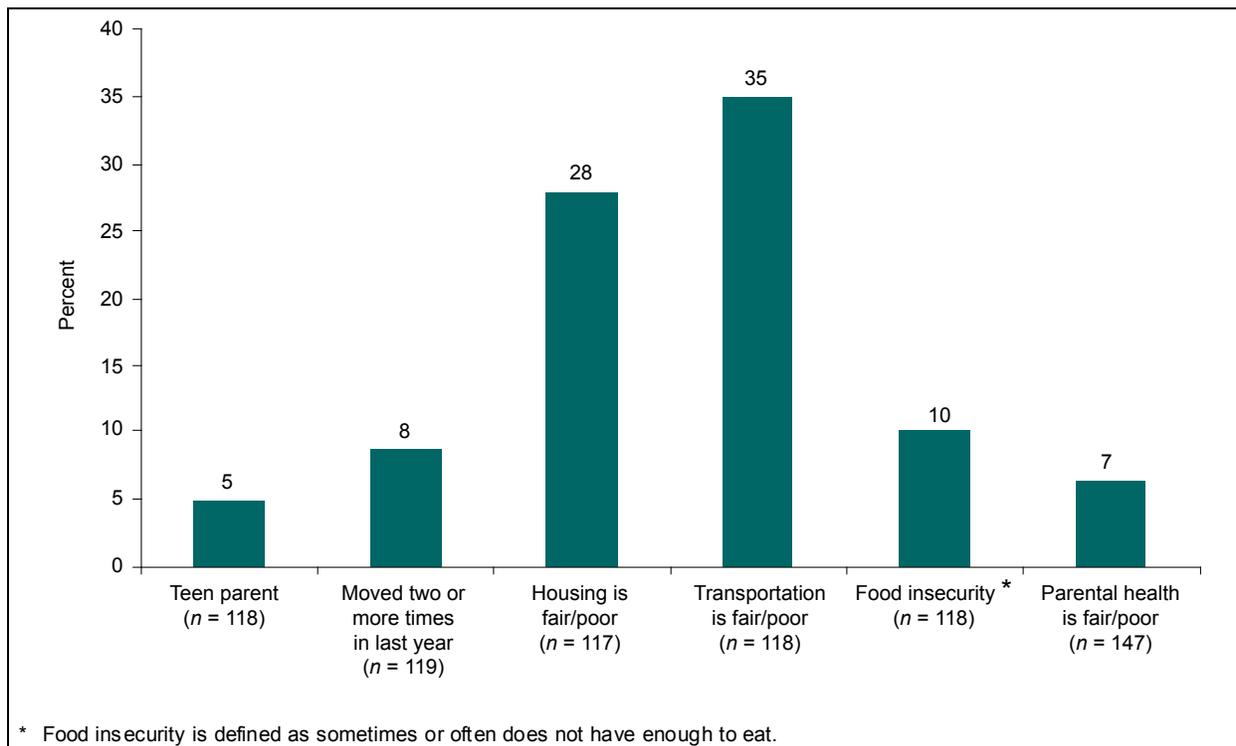


Source: Parent phone interviews.

Other family or child risk factors are displayed in Figures 13 and show the following:

- A small percentage of children (5%) were born to teen mothers, and a small percentage (8%) of children moved two or more times in the previous year.
- Close to one-third of families feel their transportation and/or housing conditions were not meeting their needs. In particular, 35% of families reported their transportation was fair or poor.
- Seven percent of caregivers rated their own overall health as fair or poor.

Figure 13. Characteristics of Families Participating in the Scholarship Program at Baseline (N = 124)



Source: Parent phone interviews.

The pilot communities are considerably diverse and include a large number of new immigrant families and a variety of different immigrant groups from countries in east Africa (e.g., Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia) and Burma/Myanmar. The application data displayed earlier showed that only 56% of households speak English at home. The parent interview also captured some of this diversity, including families' immigrant status.

- Compared to the total sample (N = 257), parents in the phone interview sample were more likely to speak English as the primary home language (68%). However, there were still 11% who spoke Karen, 7% who spoke Hmong, and 3% who spoke Spanish, among other languages. Some of these interviews were conducted in the family's home language when possible (i.e., Spanish, Hmong, or Karen).

- One-third (30%) of the families who were interviewed considered themselves immigrants or from an immigrant group. However, only 7% of the children were born outside of the United States.
- Some parents who completed the phone interview rated their English proficiency as fair or poor (27% for reading and writing skills, 24% for speaking skills).

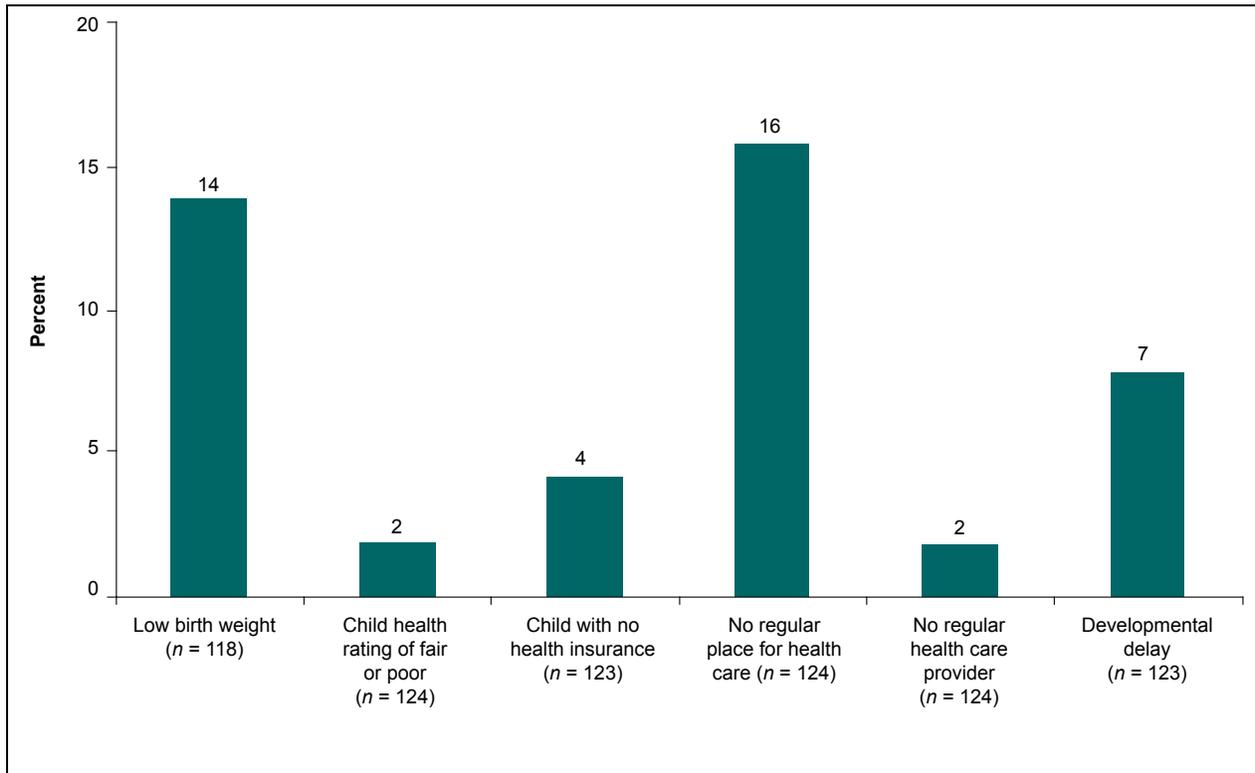
The health of a child can also contribute to school readiness (Figure 14). Studies have shown that children learn better when they are healthy.

- Fourteen percent of children were born at low birth weight¹² and 2% of children were rated by their caregivers as having fair or poor health.¹³
- Four percent of children did not have any health insurance, and 2% did not have a regular health care provider. However, a much larger percentage (16%) did not have a regular place for health care.
- Seven percent were reported to have a developmental delay as identified by a doctor.
- In addition to these global indicators of health and health care access, 13% of parents reported the child had an illness or condition (e.g., asthma, chronic ear infections) that required regular, ongoing care, and 6% of the children were limited in their activities because of an impairment or health problem.

¹² This percentage is nearly double what is typically found in national studies of the general population of young children.

¹³ This percentage is what is typically found in national surveys of young children.

Figure 14. Health Characteristics of Children Participating in the Scholarship Program at Baseline (N = 124)



Source: Parent phone interviews.

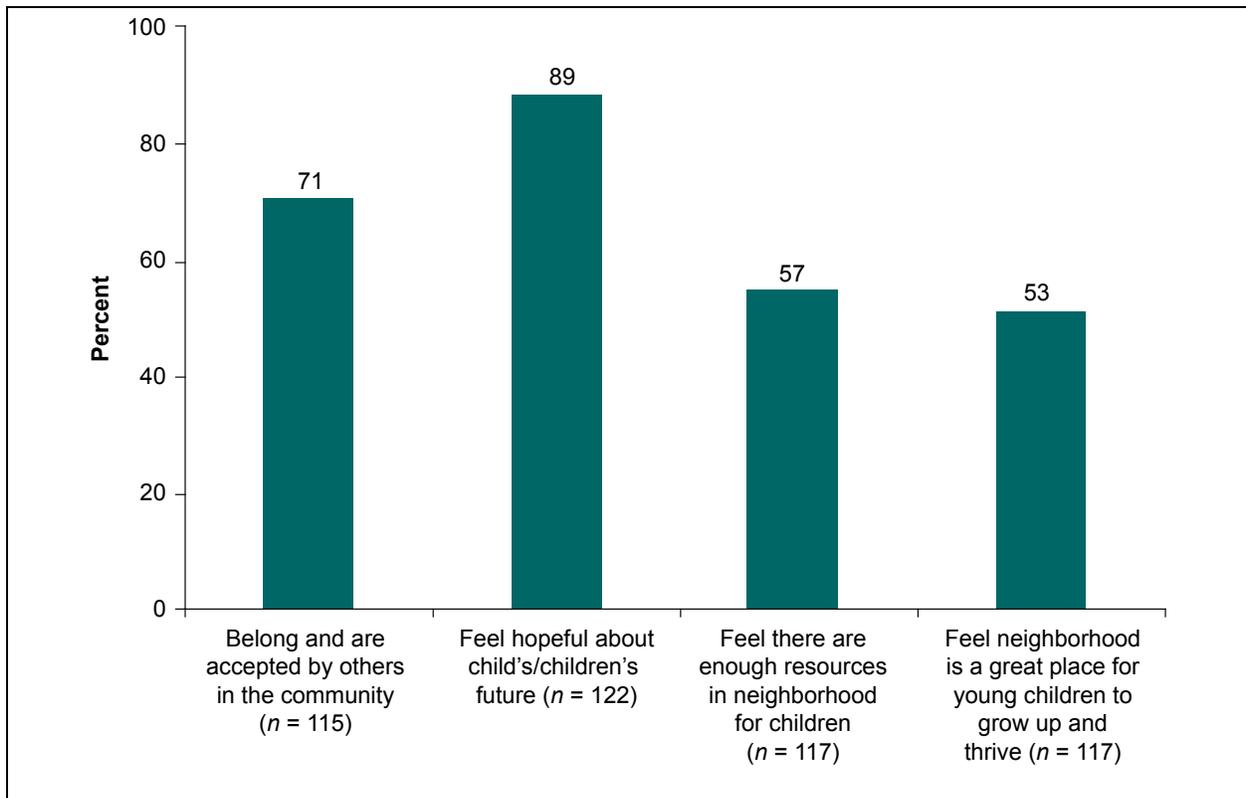
Caregivers were asked to describe any concerns they had about their children’s development, health, and behavior.

- About one-third of parents (29%) reported that their child’s doctor had conducted a developmental assessment.
- Seven percent of parents reported their child had a developmental delay that was identified by a doctor.
- When asked if they had concerns about the child’s development, 27% of parents reported “a lot” of concern in at least one area of their children’s development (speech, vision, hearing, behavior, learning, etc.).
 - Most of these parents (76%) reported concerns in multiple areas.
 - Of the parents who reported “a lot” of concern in at least one area, many parents (70%) had shared their concern with a doctor, child care provider, or other professional. Nearly all of the parents who had shared their concern (96%) felt they received good help.

The neighborhoods and communities in which children and families live can also serve to put children’s development at risk or it can help protect children in a way that promotes school readiness. We asked parents to provide their perceptions of community support. The results in Figure 15 suggest that families are positive about their communities.

- Most parents felt a sense of belonging and acceptance in their communities (71%).
- Most parents felt hopeful about their children’s future (89%).
- However, only about half (57%) felt that their neighborhood had enough resources for children and that their neighborhood was a great place for young children to grow up and thrive (53%).

Figure 15. Parents’ Perceptions of Their Community Support at Baseline (N = 124)

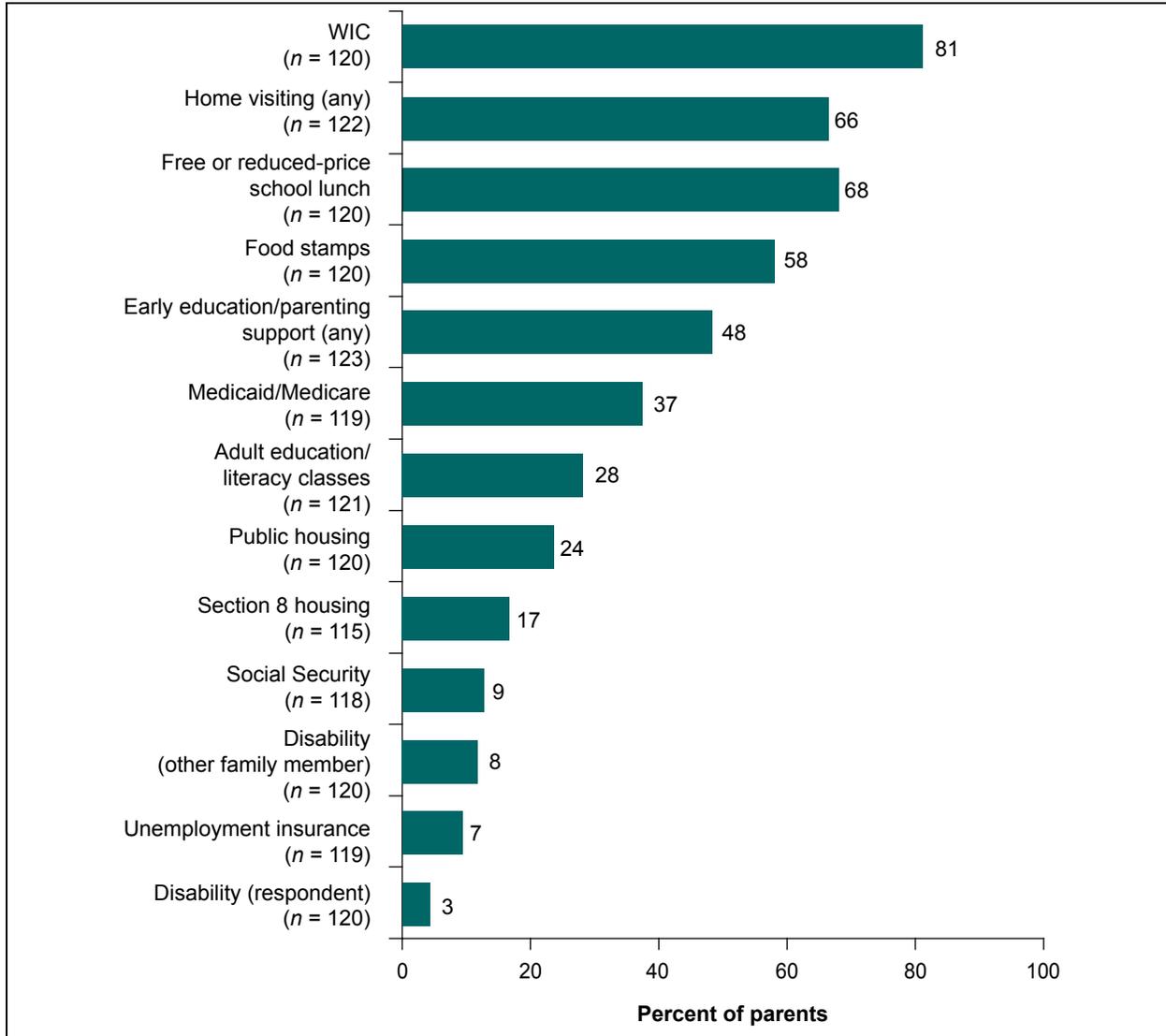


Source: Parent phone interviews.

Families participating in the scholarship program have received a number of local, county, and state services including home visiting and parent education workshops and classes (Figure 16).

- The most common benefit (81%) that families received was WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children).
- Two-thirds of the families reported receiving any home visiting services (66%) or a free or reduced-price school lunch benefit (68%).
- About half of parents (48%) reported receiving parent education or support, and about one-fourth (24%) reported using public housing assistance.

Figure 16. Families Participating in the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Who Reported Receiving Specific Services and Benefits at Baseline (N = 124)



Source: Parent phone interviews.

Year 3 Findings: Baseline and One-Year Follow-Up of Children's Home Environment and Developmental Status



In this section, we describe information from parent phone interviews and child assessments at baseline and after one year of participation in the scholarship program for the child assessments.

Sample of Children and Families

Table 4 shows the status of data collection begun in fall 2008 and continuing through 2010 for the outcome evaluation (child assessments and parent phone interviews).

- Of the 257 children, 124 (48%) families completed the baseline phone interview. Unfortunately, only 47 (18%) completed both a baseline and one-year follow-up phone interview. The latter data are not included in this report.
- Of the 257 children, 192 children (75%) had completed baseline assessments of their development ($n = 77$, 59% for Cohort 2 and $n = 115$, 91% for Cohort 3). Children ranged in age from 37 to 51 months.¹⁴ The average age at which the baseline assessment occurred was 44 months (Cohort 2 = 45 months and Cohort 3 = 43 months).
 - A total of 44 children (17%) were not assessed at baseline because they were not yet enrolled in an ECE program. Most of these children (43, 98%) were in Cohort 2, and 1 child (2%) was in Cohort 3. The other 21 missed direct assessments because the children were no longer participating in the scholarship program by the time the assessment was attempted or were repeatedly absent or uncooperative with the testing.
- Of the 257 children, 206 children (80%) had completed one-year follow-up assessments ($n = 98$, 75% for Cohort 2 and $n = 108$, 85% for Cohort 3) when the children ranged in age from 48 to 62 months. The average age of the children at the time of the follow-up assessments was 55 months (Cohort 2 = 55 months and Cohort 3 = 55 months).
 - A total of 51 children were not assessed during the one-year follow-up because they were no longer participating in the scholarship program by the time the assessment was attempted, were reported as no longer attending their selected ECE program, or were repeatedly absent or uncooperative with the testing.
- About two-thirds ($n = 163$, 63%) had both baseline and one-year follow-up assessments. These data are reported beginning on p. 40.

¹⁴ Baseline assessment took place in fall 2008 for Cohort 2 and in fall 2009 for Cohort 3. Multiple obstacles to data collection in fall 2008 resulted in a lower response rate; several issues were resolved during 2009, including identifying participating children early and making repeated attempts to follow a subset of children as they moved from one program to another.

Table 4. Baseline and One-Year Follow-up Data Collection for Child Assessments and Parent Interviews

		Baseline		One-Year Follow-up		Baseline and One-Year Follow-up	
		Child Assessment	Parent Interview	Child Assessment	Parent Interview	Child Assessment	Parent Interview
Total	257	192 (75)	124 (48)	206 (80)	83 (32)	163 (63)	47 (18)
Cohort 2	130	77 (59)	68 (52)	98 (75)	42 (32)	64 (49)	26 (20)
Cohort 3	127	115 (91)	56 (44)	108 (85)	41 (32)	99 (78)	21 (17)

Notes. Percentages are in parentheses.

To put some of the baseline parent interview data in context, we compare the scholarship data to a selected number of responses in the Wilder Baseline Study (Wilder Research, 2008). The Wilder Baseline Study was conducted in 2007 and collected some of the same information from low-income families living in the Saint Paul pilot area who had children who were between three and five years old.

Home and Family Activities Promoting Early Literacy and School Readiness

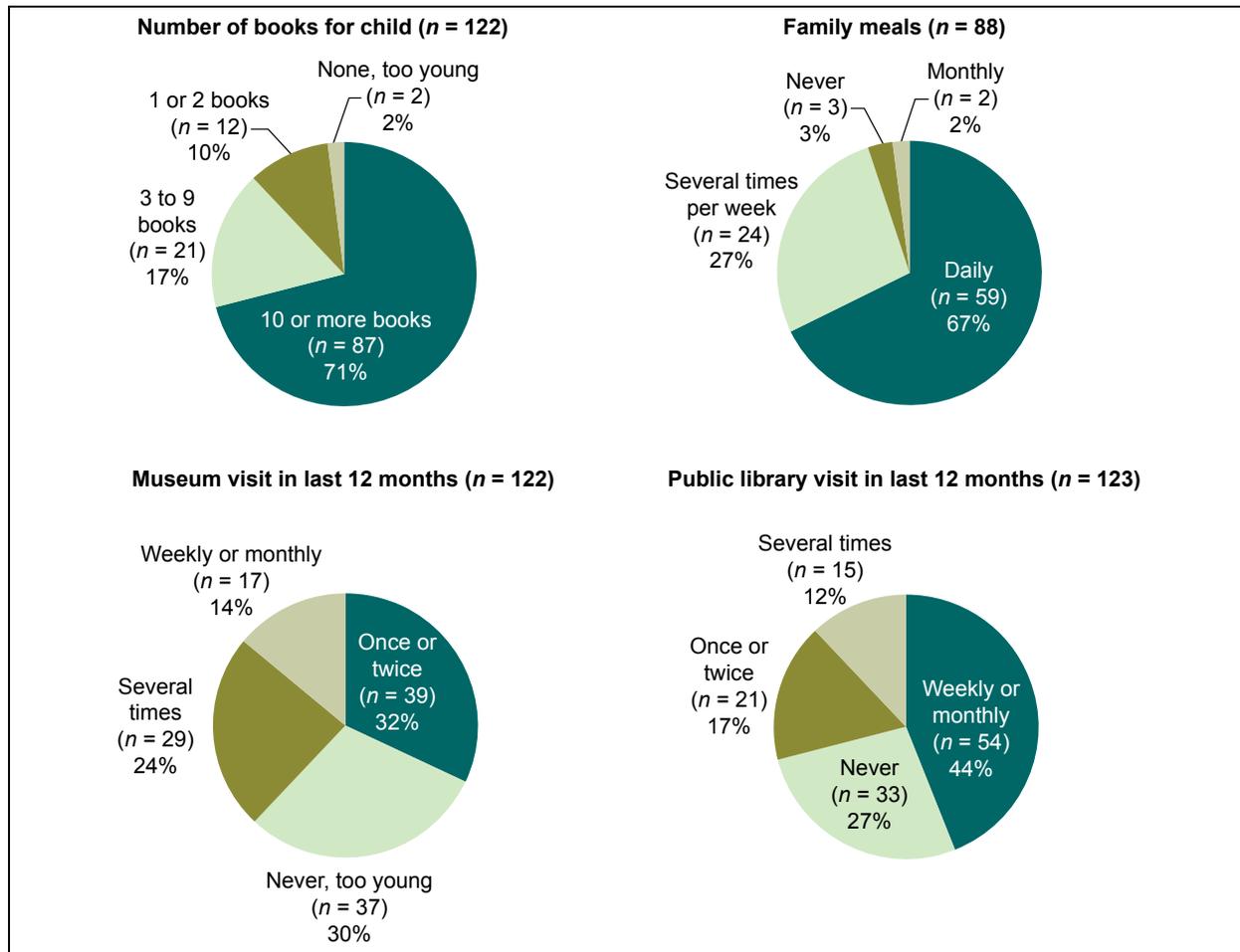
Parenting practices and family activities that stimulate language and promote early literacy are essential to the success of an initiative like the Scholarship Program. Several of the items below (Figures 17 and 18) are from the HOME Inventory, a well validated, widely used measure with demonstrated sensitivity to key differences in home environments in terms of enriching activities related to child development and later academic achievement. The degree to which parents or family members read, tell stories, or sing to their children also impacts early development, and in particular, their language and literacy.

The data in figures 17-19 show that the majority of parents are engaging in activities and providing home environments that support the development of their children. For example, Figure 17 shows that 71% of the parents reported their children has access to 10 or more books, 67% regularly eating together as a family, and 44% visiting a public library weekly or monthly in the last 12 months. When we compare these data to available data from the Wilder Baseline Study (Wilder Research, 2008), parents of children in the Scholarship Program were as likely to take their child to visit a public library compared to the baseline survey sample (45%).

Figure 18 shows that many parents are regularly reading to their children, singing songs, and talking with their children, activities that promote early literacy and language development. Parents in the scholarship sample at baseline were more likely to report these activities compared to the sample of families in the Wilder Baseline Survey. For example, 45% of scholarship parents reported reading to their children every day compared to 38% in the Wilder sample. Scholarship parents also were more likely to talk or tell stories to their child every day (56% compared with 48%).

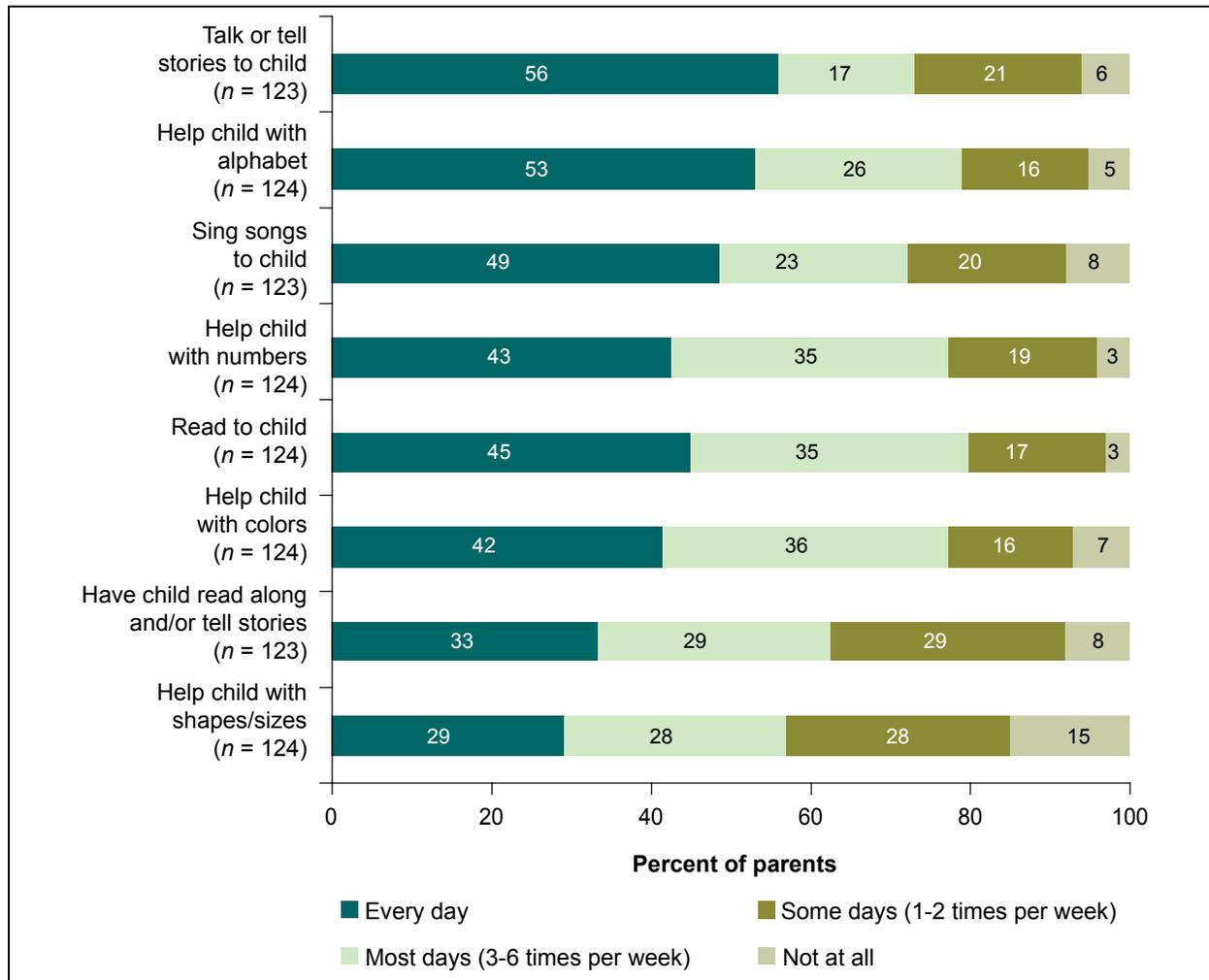
In addition, a large percentage of parents in the Scholarship Program reported working on skills and knowledge at home. Most parents reported working on number skills (98%), bringing home learning materials (93%), spending time working on creative activities (99%), and having a place for child's books and school materials (99%).

Figure 17. Parents' Report of Family Activities That Promote Early Literacy (N = 124)



Source: Parent phone interviews.

Figure 18. Parents' Report of Early Literacy Activities with Their Children (N = 124)



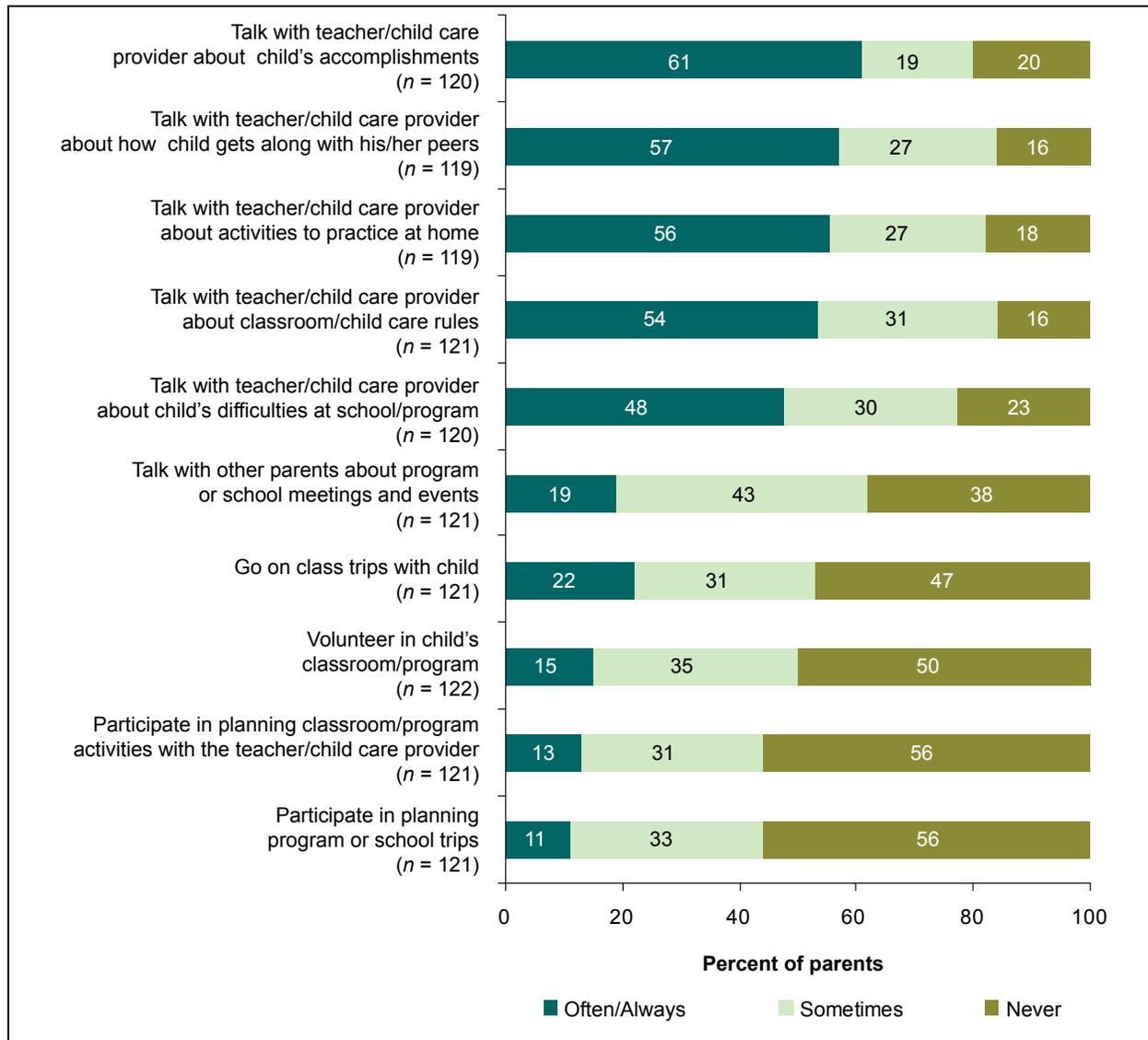
Source: Parent phone interviews.

Parent Involvement in Child's ECE Program

Most parents reported that they engage in one or more activities with the ECE program to support their children's learning and development (Figure 19).

- Four-fifths of parents (80%) talk with their child's teacher about behavior and accomplishments, classroom rules and expectations, and activities to practice at home.
- About one-third to half of parents sometimes or often volunteer in their child's classroom, go on class trips, and participate in planning activities or trips.
 - A majority (85%) reported sharing stories about when the child was in school. This percentage may be lower than the other activities because of cultural differences in the experience of many of the parents, either because of a lack of experience in the United States (32% did not complete high school) or attending school in a different country (30% reported being from an immigrant group).

Figure 19. Parent Involvement in Their Child's ECE Program (N = 124)



Source: Parent phone interviews.

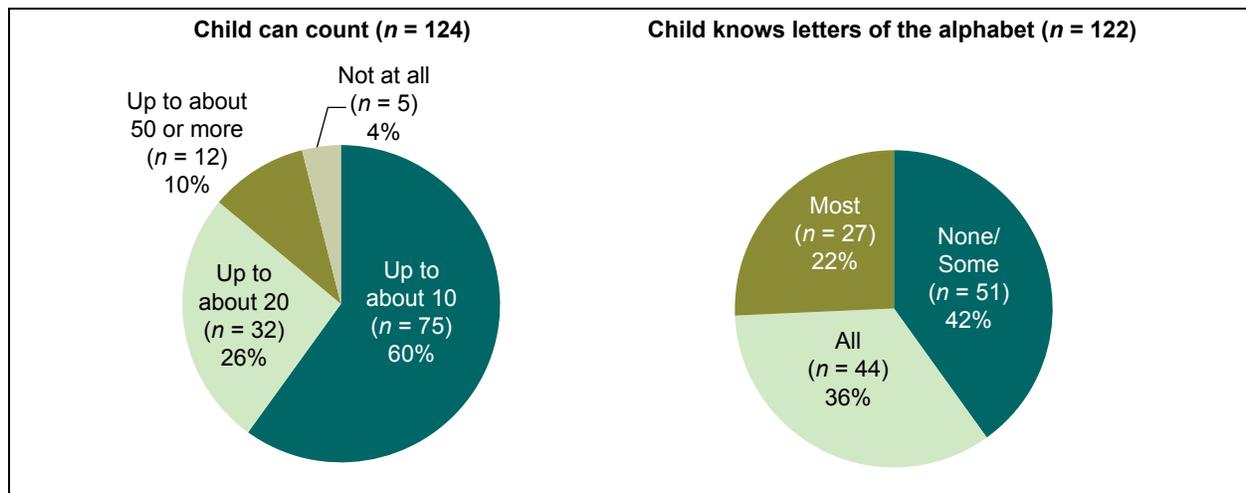
We do not have comparison data for families with children in this age group (i.e., 3 to 4 years) but these data may reflect a high level of commitment by parents toward their children's education and early learning. It may also reflect the fact that the programs were of high-quality and had to have strategies in place that promoted family partnerships to receive a 3- or 4-star rating.

Parent Report of Selected Developmental Skills

According to parents, many of the children are showing proficiency at baseline with many important developmental skills (Figures 20 to 22). Children at the time of the phone interview were on average 44 months old (ranging from 37 to 52 months for Cohort 2 baseline interviews and 38 to 49 months for Cohort 3 baseline interviews).

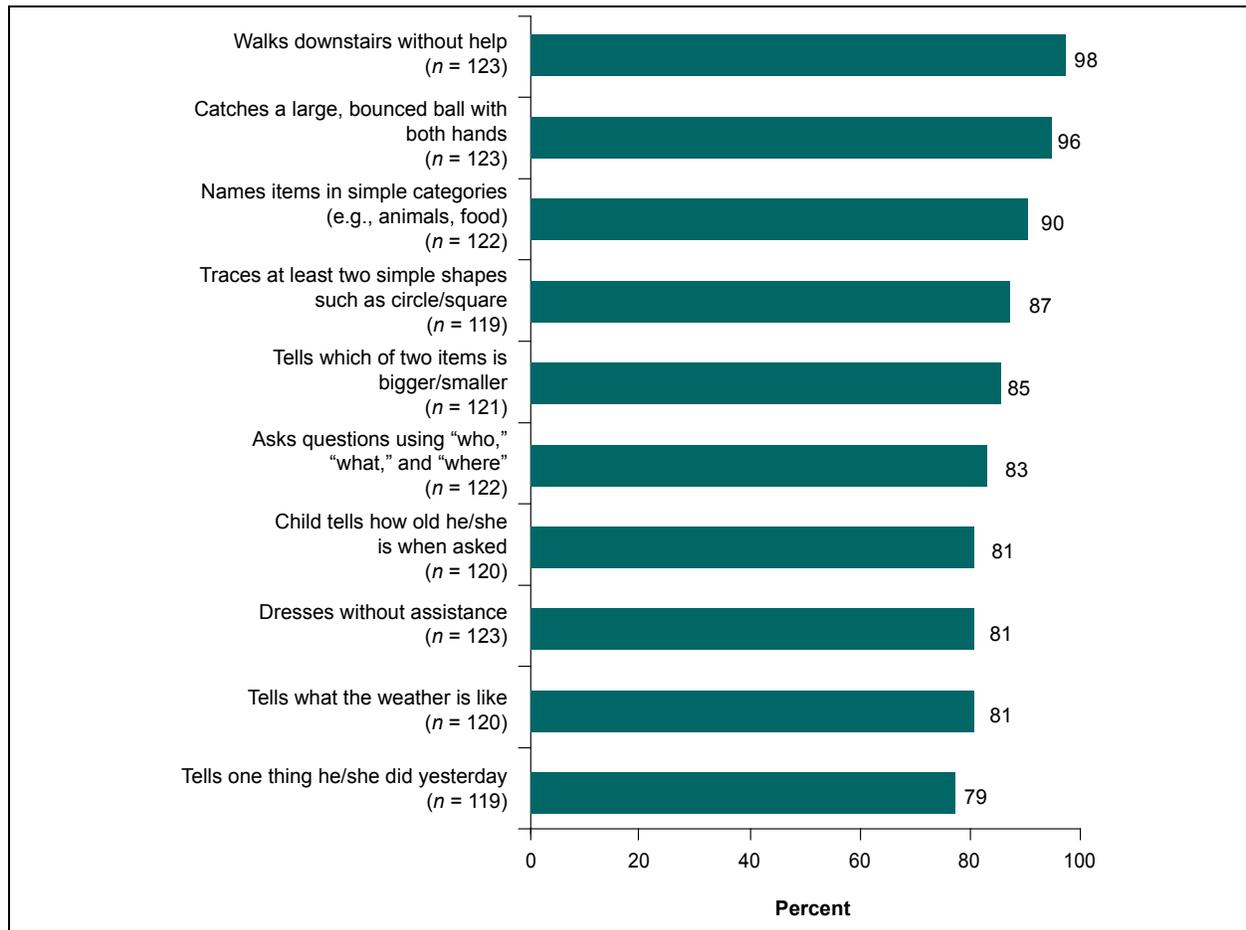
- Children are expected to know most to all of their letters and to be starting to count when they enter kindergarten. At baseline, three-fifths (58%) of the children in the Scholarship Program were reported to know most or all of their letters, compared with the Wilder Baseline Study (44%). Nearly all of the children in the Scholarship program (96%) were counting (Figure 20), compared with 83% of children in the Wilder Baseline Study.
- With regard to gross and fine motor development, most children were walking without assistance (98%), catching large balls (96%), and tracing simple shapes (87%) (Figure 21).
- About four-fifths of the children were reported to be using language to communicate simple facts (79%), ask questions (83%), and tell how old they are (81%) (Figure 22).

Figure 20. Key Child Development Indicators Important for School Readiness, for Scholarship Program Participants at Baseline (N = 124)



Source: Parent phone interviews.

Figure 21. Key Child Development Indicators Important for School Readiness, for Scholarship Program Participants at Baseline (N = 124)

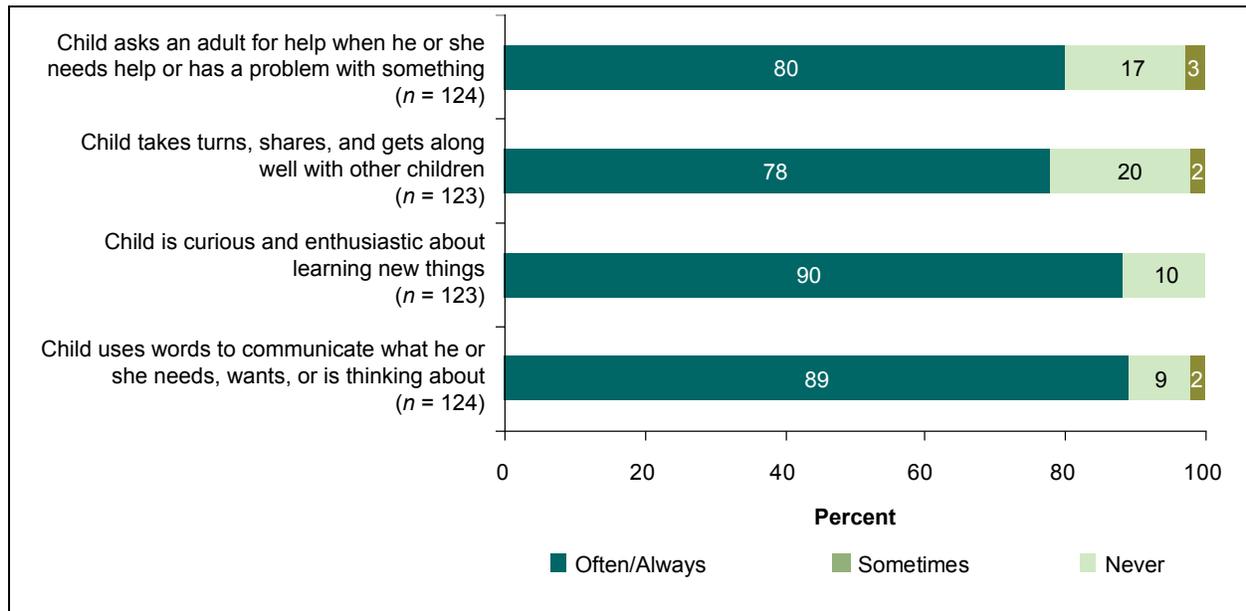


Source: Parent phone interviews.

Children’s social skills and approaches to learning are important aspects of school readiness (Figure 22).

- Most parents reported that their children ask an adult for help (80%) and can share, take turns, and/or get along well with other children (78%).
- Almost all of the parents report their children use words to communicate (89%) and are curious and enthusiastic about learning new things (90%).
- Fewer children in the Wilder Baseline Study sample were reported to be often or always asking an adult for help (64%), sharing or taking turns and getting along well with other children (69%). In addition, fewer children were also reported to be using words to communicate regularly (80%) and to be curious and enthusiastic about learning new things (83%).

Figure 22. Key Child Development Indicators Important for School Readiness, for Scholarship Program Participants at Baseline (N = 124)



Source: Parent phone interviews.

Baseline and One-Year Child Assessment Outcome Data

The Scholarship Program logic model predicts that children in the community will make progress towards achieving age-expected school readiness skills. The MELF Research Consortium developed a set of measures to assess school readiness. Children’s development was assessed with three different methods: parent-reported items in phone interviews (described at baseline above on pages 36 to 38 and in Figures 20 to 22), direct child assessments by trained observers, and teacher-reported measures of behavior and social skills. Parents’ reports of children’s development on key indicators of school readiness provide information about skills considered important for children to develop or be in the process of developing before they reach kindergarten. Unfortunately, we did not obtain an adequate response rate (i.e., only 18% of parents completed interviews at both baseline and one-year follow-up) to examine changes in parent-reported developmental skills and abilities. Standardized, norm-referenced measures (i.e., the direct child assessments and teacher checklists) are also helpful because they have well-documented reliability and validity and the resulting data can be used to compare participants to their same-age peers. The set of measures together captures the five domains of school readiness identified by the National Education Goals Panel.¹⁵ Below we focus on the change on 4 of the 5 domains from baseline to the one-year follow-up in developmental trajectories as measured by standardized assessments, providing results on early indicators of school readiness skills after one year of ECE program participation.

¹⁵ The five areas of school readiness are cognition and general knowledge, communicative skills, emotional well-being and social competence, approaches to learning, and physical well-being and motor development.

Measures Used in Scholarship Evaluation

In order to examine the impact of participation in high-quality ECE programs on children's school readiness, the standard measures are being used with the children participating in the scholarship program at three points in time: at baseline (shortly after they are initially enrolled in the ECE program, within 6 to 8 weeks of enrollment); one year later (referred to as the one-year follow-up), after ECE program attendance for one year; and finally, as they enter kindergarten (within 6 to 8 weeks of entry) after 2 years of ECE program participation.

- Direct assessments of children using standardized tests of language and cognition were completed by trained assessors at the ECE programs.
- Each child's ECE teacher was asked to complete a checklist form containing two widely used measures of behavior.

Table 5 describes the measures used in the assessment protocol.

Table 5. Child Outcomes Used in Scholarship Evaluation

Domain	Measure	Scale	Measure Description
Language	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test 4th edition (PPVT-4) (Dunn & Dunn, 2007)	Receptive Vocabulary	The PPVT-4 is a quick method of assessing receptive language for children over 2 years and 6 months. It is a direct standardized assessment collected by a trained assessor. A score of 100 is an average score, with a standard deviation of 15.
Early Math	Woodcock-Johnson III 3rd edition (WJ-III) (Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001)	Applied Problems	WJ-III is a widely used collection of tests measuring achievement in reading, mathematics, written language, and general knowledge. One subtest, Applied Problems, was used as a measure of mathematical reasoning and skills. It is a direct standardized assessment collected by a trained assessor in 10 minutes. A score of 100 is an average score, with standard deviation of 15.
Social-Emotional	Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation – 30 items (SCBE-30) (LaFreniere & Dumas, 1996)	Social Competence Anger-Aggression	The SCBE-30 is a teacher-completed rating scale measuring the three dimensions of social competence, anxiety-withdrawal, and anger-aggression in children ages 2-1/2 to 6. This report includes data for two of these three dimensions. It takes approximately 15 minutes to complete the items derived from the longer version of the SCBE-80. This is not a norm-referenced assessment; scores are calculated by summing the scores for each item in a subscale. SRI compared the scores for children with scholarships to a representative sample of children published by the authors of the measure.
Approaches to Learning	Preschool Learning Behaviors Scale (PLBS) (McDermott, Green, Francis, & Stott, 2000)	Attention	The PLBS is a measure of children’s approach to learning which includes items that ask teachers to rate children’s ability to stay on task and pay attention. The raw score is calculated by reverse-scoring some items and then summing to obtain a total (i.e., higher scores reflect more attention, concentration, etc.). The raw score was then converted to a T-score based on the author’s guidelines. In a representative sample, the mean T-score is 50 with a standard deviation of 10.

Below we describe the results of the assessments for baseline and the one-year follow-up assessment.

- Most of the scores are presented as means and standard deviations of the standard scores.
- Standard scores are adjusted for age and compare a child's performance on the assessment with children who are matched on age and thus the score is based on how the child is performing relative to his/her peers. We would expect that a child who is developing on a typical trajectory to have the same score over time even though they are learning new skills and have greater knowledge.
- We also present the percent of children who scored more than one standard deviation below the mean. This percentage reflects children who are performing far below their peers and may be in need of early intervention to change their trajectory and be ready for school.

Language

Children's language (i.e., receptive vocabulary) was measured by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-4). Figure 23 depicts the developmental progress on language development as measured by the PPVT-4 for the children who had both baseline and one-year follow-up assessments ($n = 158$).

- The average PPVT-4 score at baseline was 81.9 (i.e., more than 1 standard deviation below the mean).
- The PPVT-4 scores increased 5 points at the one-year follow-up assessment to 87.0 (Figure 23).
- As described in last year's annual report, approximately half (51%) of the children in the Scholarship Program demonstrate below average language development at baseline. However, at the one-year follow-up assessment, children's scores on the PPVT-4 were significantly higher and less children (45%) were scoring below average on this measure ($p < .001$) (Figure 24).

In examining these scores, it is important to remember the diversity of the children's background. Table 3 on page 19 shows that the children participating in the scholarship program are diverse in their language/communication backgrounds. When the assessors completed the child assessments, they were asked to first complete the PPVT-4 and determine if the child reached the minimum score to continue testing in English.

- More than one-fifth (23%; 43 of 189) of the children assessed at baseline spoke a language other than English at home including Karen, Hmong, Korean, Vietnamese, Spanish, and Somali. These children were still administered the PPVT-4 (and their scores are included in the table), but most of these children could not complete the remainder of the battery because of their limited English skills at baseline.
- At the one-year follow-up assessment, only 15% (27 of 175) of the children spoke a language other than English at home and could not complete the remainder of the assessment in English.

This finding could be viewed as a positive effect of the children’s enrollment in a high-quality ECE program that not only supports their learning and development but may provide additional opportunities to learn English by speaking and interacting with the teachers, staff, and other children.

Figure 23. Change in PPVT Score From Baseline to One-Year Follow-Up (*n* = 158)

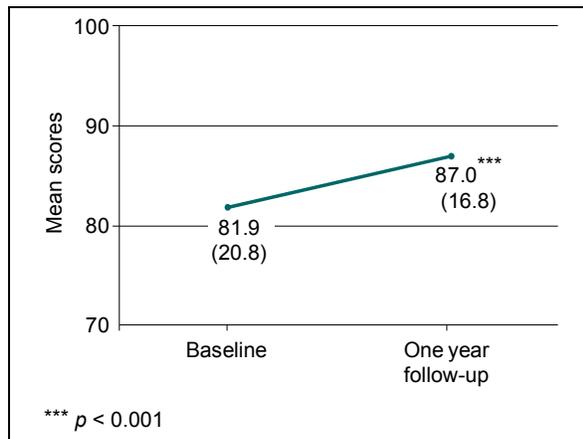
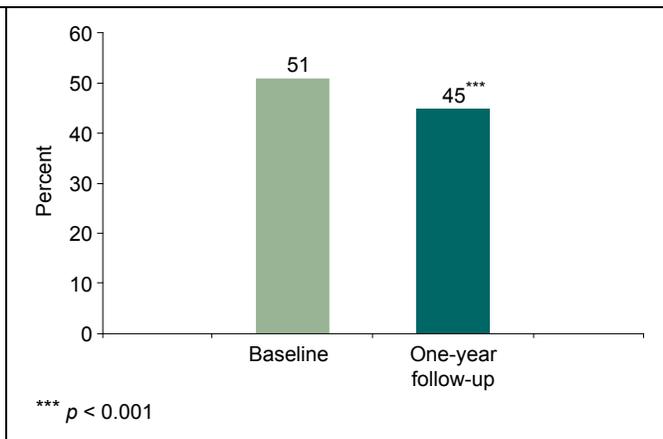


Figure 24. Percent of Children with Low Scores on the PPVT at Baseline and One-Year Follow-Up (*n* = 158)



Source: Direct child assessments.

Early Math

Children’s cognitive development was assessed using a Woodcock-Johnson III subtest (Applied Problems). The subtest measures children’s ability to count and to perform other mathematical reasoning (e.g., children are asked to count objects on a page or asked to fill-in the missing number in a series). Figure 25 depicts the developmental progress on this subtest for the children who had both baseline and one-year follow-up assessments (*n* = 118).

- The average Applied Problems score at baseline was 95.7 and increased 1.9 points at the one-year follow-up assessment to 97.7 ($p = .08$).
- At baseline, approximately 19% of the children performed below average (i.e., scored below 85) (Figure 26). At follow-up, a significantly lower percentage of children (9%) were scoring below average on the Applied Problems subtest ($p < .01$). See Figure 26.

Figure 25. Change in Woodcock-Johnson Applied Problems Score From Baseline to One-Year Follow-Up (*n* = 118)

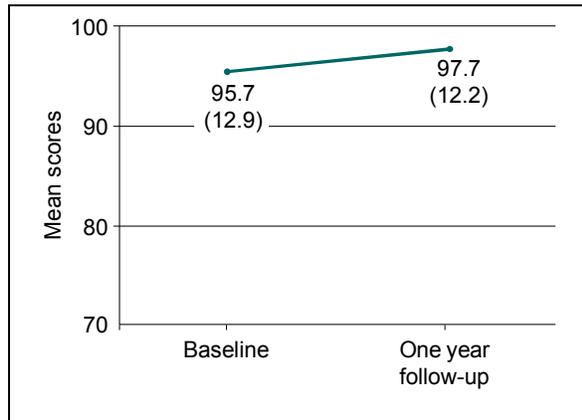
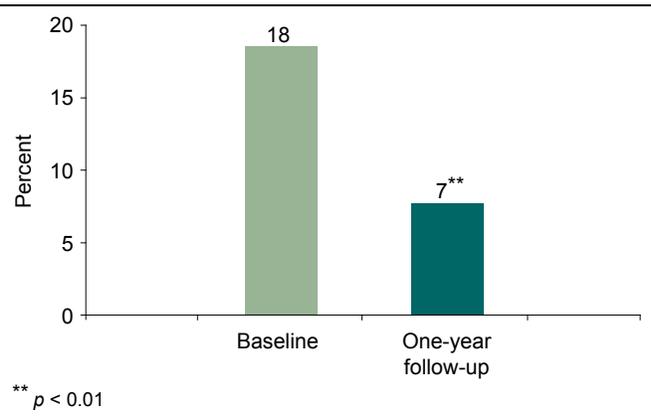


Figure 26. Percent of Children with Low Scores on the Woodcock Johnson Applied Problems at Baseline and One-Year Follow-Up (*n* = 118)



Source: Direct child assessments.

Interpretation of Language and Early Math Findings. These data show that children in the Scholarship Program are making significant and meaningful developmental progress and their developmental trajectories are different than they would be without participating in the intervention and attending a high-quality ECE program (i.e., moving closer to age-expected performance). Figure 23 shows significant increase in language (receptive vocabulary) after one year of participation in a high-quality ECE program. A gain of 5 points is equivalent to an effect size of .33, considered to be a moderate effect size. Compared to national studies of the effects of child care with variable quality on children’s learning and development (0.10 to 0.15) (Bernal & Keane, 2006) with higher quality programs having a bigger impact (Burchinal & Cryer, 2003; McCartney, Dearing, Taylor, & Bub, 2007; NICHD & Duncan, 2003; Peisner-Feinberg & Burchinal, 1997) and to the estimated effects of Head Start on children’s cognitive development (0.10 to 0.30) (Barnett, 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, 2005), children who participated in the Scholarship Program made greater than average gains on language. In addition, we would expect a child who scored low at one point to continue to score low one year later without any intervention or developmental support. We continue to follow the children into kindergarten and would expect to see greater gains in both the mean score but also in the percentage of children scoring average or above average after two years of high-quality ECE program participation.

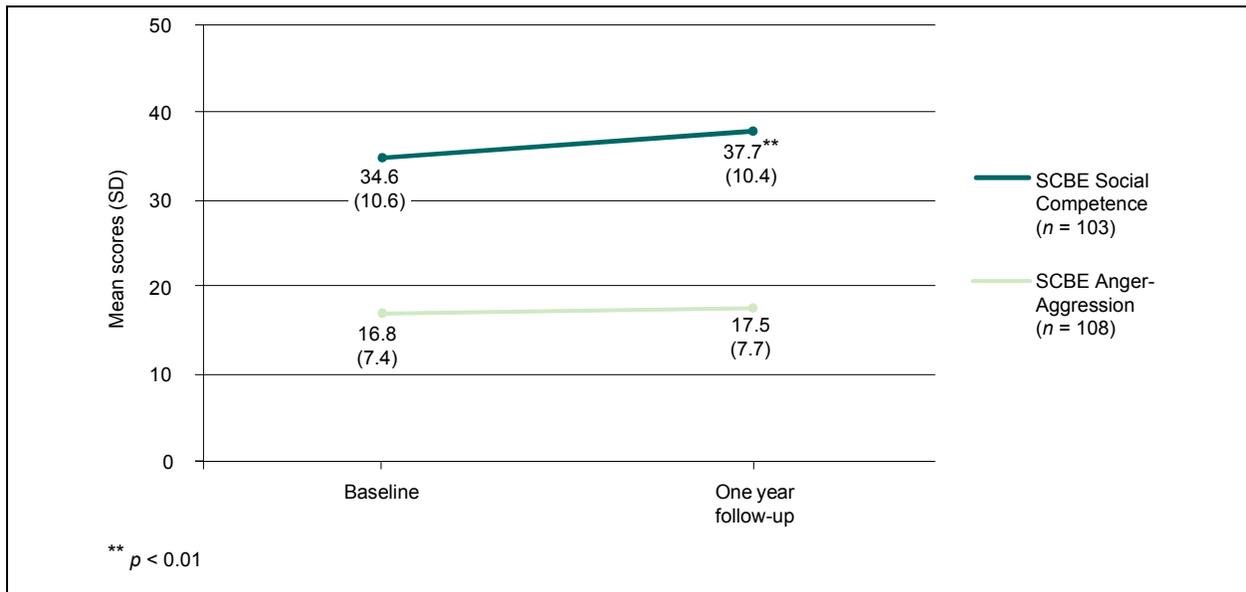
Other preschool evaluations find a range of positive effect sizes. Gormley and Gayer’s (2005) evaluation of Tulsa, Oklahoma’s pre-kindergarten program found effect sizes of 0.39 (cognitive ability) and 0.38 (language ability). Magnuson, Ruhm, and Waldfogel (2007) estimate effect sizes of 0.24 (reading) and 0.20 (math) for pre-kindergarten attendance among disadvantaged children in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten cohort. An analysis of intensive early education programs reveal an effect size of 0.97 for Perry Preschool participants and 0.62 for Abecedarian participants at age 5 (Karoly, Kilburn, & Cannon, 2005). Finally, a more recent intervention study of children with two years of a high-quality, intensive state-funded PreK program in New Jersey showed an effect size on the PPVT of 0.42.

Social-Emotional

The teacher-completed checklist forms were distributed during the same time period when direct assessments of children were completed. The checklist form included the SCBE-30 (Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation—30 items) and the Preschool Learning Behaviors Scale (PLBS) Attention Subscale. The SCBE-30 is a measure of children's social competence and adjustment. The assessment data displayed here show two of the three domains of behaviors: social competence and anger-aggression. This is not a norm-referenced assessment; scores are calculated by summing the scores for each item in a subscale. Figure 27 shows the mean raw scores of scholarship children at baseline and one-year follow-up on these two domains.

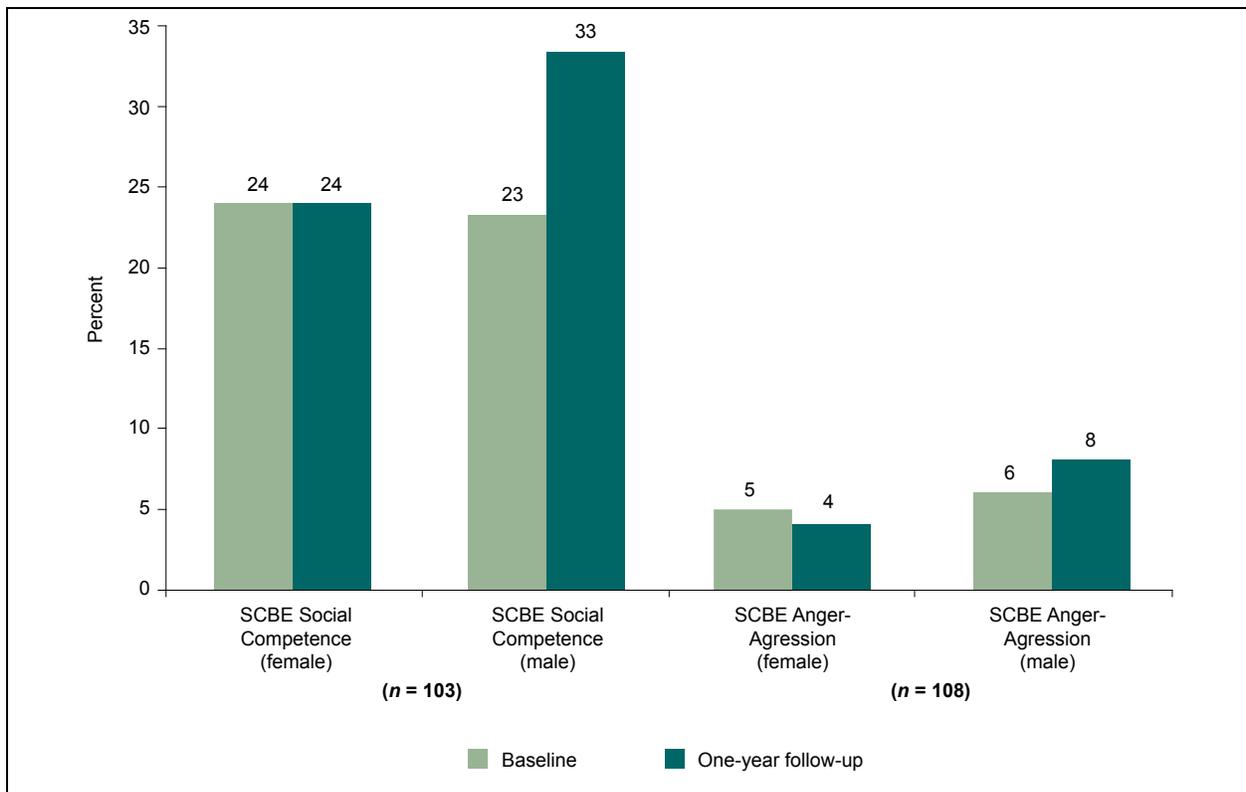
- Children's scores increased from 34.6 at baseline to 37.7 at the one-year follow-up on the social competence domain ($n = 103$; $p < .01$).
- Children's scores did not change significantly on the anger-aggression domain ($n = 108$).
- In addition, SRI compared the scores for children with scholarships to a representative sample of children published by the authors of the measure (LaFreniere & Dumas, 1996). Figure 28 shows the percentages of scholarship children whose scores significantly deviated from the average scores of this published sample of preschool children by 1 standard deviation. This is shown separately for boys and girls.
 - At baseline 23% of boys and 24% of girls have social competence scores that are 1 standard deviation lower than children of the same age and gender in a representative U.S. sample.
 - At the one-year follow-up assessment, this percentage stayed the same for girls (24%) but increased for boys (33%).
 - For anger-aggression scores, at baseline, 5% of girls and 6% of boys at baseline have scores that would warrant concern.
 - The children's scores do not change substantially at the one-year follow-up assessment (4% of girls and 8% of boys).

Figure 27. Change From Baseline to One-Year Follow-Up on Teacher Report Measures of Social-Emotional Development



Source: Teacher checklists.

Figure 28. Percent of Children with Low Scores on Teacher Report Measures of Social-Emotional Development at Baseline and One-Year Follow-Up



Source: Teacher checklists.

Approaches to Learning

The PLBS is a measure of children’s approaches to learning that includes items that ask teachers to rate children’s ability to stay on task and pay attention. The raw score is calculated by reverse-scoring some items and then summing to obtain a total score (i.e., higher scores reflect more attention, concentration). The raw score was then converted to a T-score based on the author’s guidelines. In a representative sample, the mean T-score is 50 with a standard deviation of 10.

- Figure 29 depicts the developmental progress on the attention measure for the children who had both baseline and one-year follow-up assessments ($n = 103$). There were no significant changes in scores from baseline to one-year follow-up.
- Figure 30 shows that at baseline 47% of this sample of 3-year-old children were rated by their teachers as having low attention (i.e., 47% of children had T-scores that were 1 standard deviation below the mean). At the one-year follow-up assessment, the percentage of children with low attention scores was unchanged (44%).

Figure 29. Change From Baseline to One-Year Follow-Up on the Teacher Report Measure of Attention ($n = 103$)

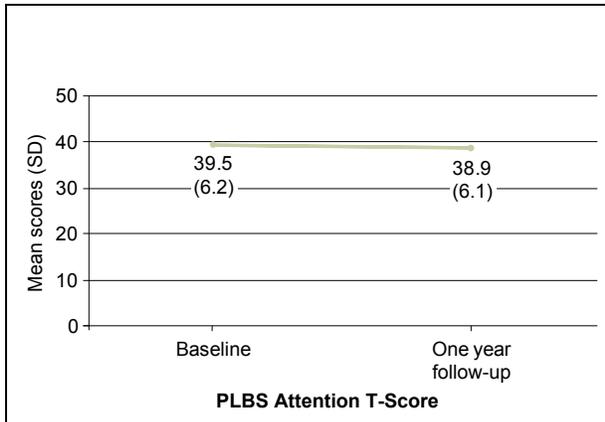
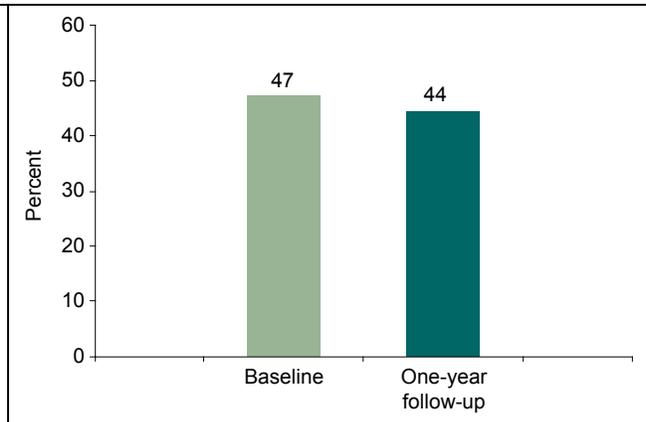


Figure 30. Percent of Children with Low Scores on Teacher Report Measures of Attention at Baseline and One-Year Follow-Up ($n = 103$)



Source: Teacher checklists.

Interpretation of Social-Emotional and Approaches to Learning Findings. The findings show significant improvement in children’s social skills between baseline and one year later. There were no significant changes on average after one year for scores on behavior problems (i.e., anger-aggression) or attention and task persistence. However, there was a trend for slightly fewer children to have poor scores on the attention and task persistence ratings by teachers.

Year 3 Findings: ECE Program Supply and Quality in the Pilot Communities



The third component of the Scholarship Program is implementation of an ECE program quality rating system, Parent Aware, to rate and monitor ECE program supply and quality. In this section, we describe changes in (1) the availability of ECE programs in and near districts 6 and 7 in Saint Paul and (2) participation in, and ratings from, the Parent Aware rating system. We also show the geographical span of ECE programs selected by families to enroll their children using the scholarship funds. ECE programs and 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).¹⁶ We present total supply of Parent Aware-rated programs by their quality ratings and by the number of slots available (vacancies) in each program in 2008, 2009, and 2010 to show how the supply and quality changed in these specific pilot areas.

To describe the supply of ECE programs and slots in the pilot area, maps of districts 6 and 7 and nearby areas that include four zip codes (55101, 55103, 55104, and 55117) are shown in figures 26a, 26b, and Appendix B. These zip codes were chosen to represent those that overlap with districts 6 and 7 defined throughout the report as in and near the pilot areas. These are 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 NACCRRAware, a web-based dataset available from the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies that provides public-use data about many ECE programs throughout the United States,¹⁷ and from the Parent Aware website.¹⁸

- Data on supply (capacity and availability of slots) were obtained from NACCRRAware in September of each year.
- Data on Parent Aware ratings were obtained from the Parent Aware website in December of each year.

¹⁶ Reports for the first three years of the Parent Aware evaluation are available on the MELF website at www.melf.org.

¹⁷ Data are available at <http://www.naccrra.org/membership/naccrraware/>.

¹⁸ Data are available at <http://www.parentawareratings.org/>.

Changes in the Supply of ECE Programs in the Pilot Areas from 2008 to 2010

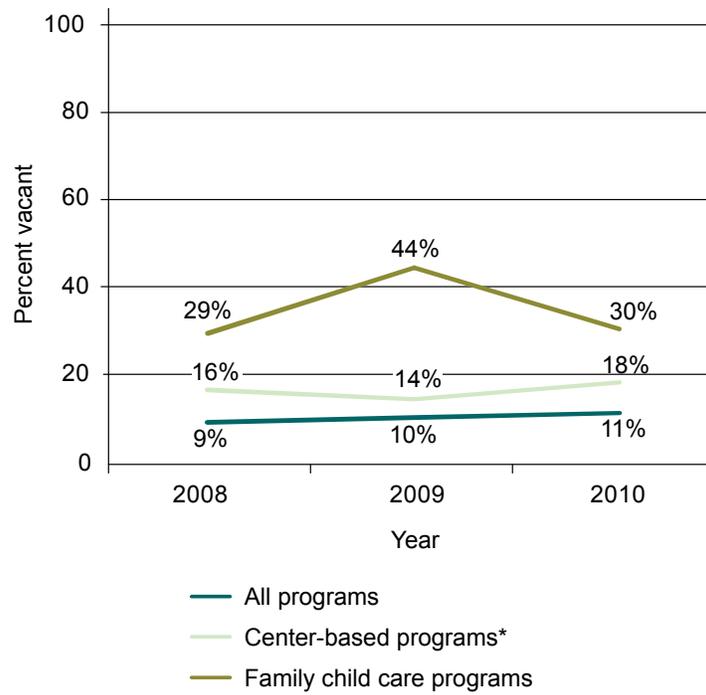
To examine whether the supply of ECE programs changed over the course of the Scholarship Program implementation, we analyzed the programs in and near the pilot area during the first year of implementation (September 2008) and again during both the second and third years of implementation (September 2009 and September 2010). Below we describe the overall change from 2008 to 2010 (Figure 31).

- The number of high-quality programs (3- and 4-star rated programs) in and near the pilot area increased more than 55%, from 22 programs to 34.¹⁹ The additional programs included six center-based programs (four nonprofit, one for-profit, and one Head Start site) and seven family child care programs.
- The total capacity of high-quality programs in and near the pilot area increased 70% (from 1,011 slots to 1,723 slots) between 2008 and 2010. Changes in capacity varied by the type of ECE program.
 - For-profit and nonprofit center-based programs increased capacity by 85% (421 slots).
 - Family child care programs increased capacity by 643% (76 slots), which can be partially attributed to the fact that the number of high-quality family child care programs in and near the pilot area increased from one to eight.
 - The number of slots in school-based programs for which 2010 capacity data is available remained the same (159 slots).
 - Head Start sites gained an additional 240 slots when a fourth pre-existing site in or near the pilot area became rated in Parent Aware.
- The number of available slots (vacancies) in high-quality programs in and near the pilot area increased more than 200% (from 95 to 192). The average vacancy rate (percent of total slots that are available) across programs increased from 9% to 11% between September 2008 and September 2010. Changes in vacancy at each time point varied by the type of ECE program.
 - In September 2008, 79 of the 493 slots (16%) at high-quality center-based programs in and near the pilot area were vacant (i.e., available for children to enroll). By 2009, the percentage of vacant slots had not increased (14%, 104 of 755 slots), but by September of 2010 the percentage increased to 18% (165 of 914 slots).²⁰
 - Between September 2008 and September 2009, there was a significant increase in the percentage of vacant slots in family child care programs (29% in September 2008 to 44% in September 2009). However, in September of 2010, the percentage of vacant slots decreased back to September 2008 levels (30%).
 - 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 few to no open slots at any time point.

¹⁹ Eight of these high-quality ECE programs do not have capacity and vacancy data in NACCRR Aware and are not represented in the following discussion of capacity and vacancy rates.

²⁰ These results may be due in part to the influx of Cohort 3 children using their new scholarships at these programs beginning in fall of 2009, and then the departure of Cohort 2 children to kindergarten in fall of 2010.

Figure 31. Percent of High-Quality Vacant Slots (Vacancies) In and Near the Pilot Area Across Time, by Type Of Program



* This category does not include Head Start and school-based programs since those programs have zero vacancy rates.

See Appendix B for figures showing the geographical distribution of high-quality programs and the number of available slots at each program in September of 2008, 2009, and 2010.

Changes in the Quality of ECE Programs in the Pilot Areas from 2008 to 2010

To examine whether the quality of ECE programs changed over the course of the Scholarship Program implementation, we analyzed the programs in and near the pilot area at the beginning of the Scholarship Program, during the first year of implementation (December 2008), and again during both the second and third years of implementation (December 2009 and December 2010). Data on quality were obtained from the Parent Aware ratings website.

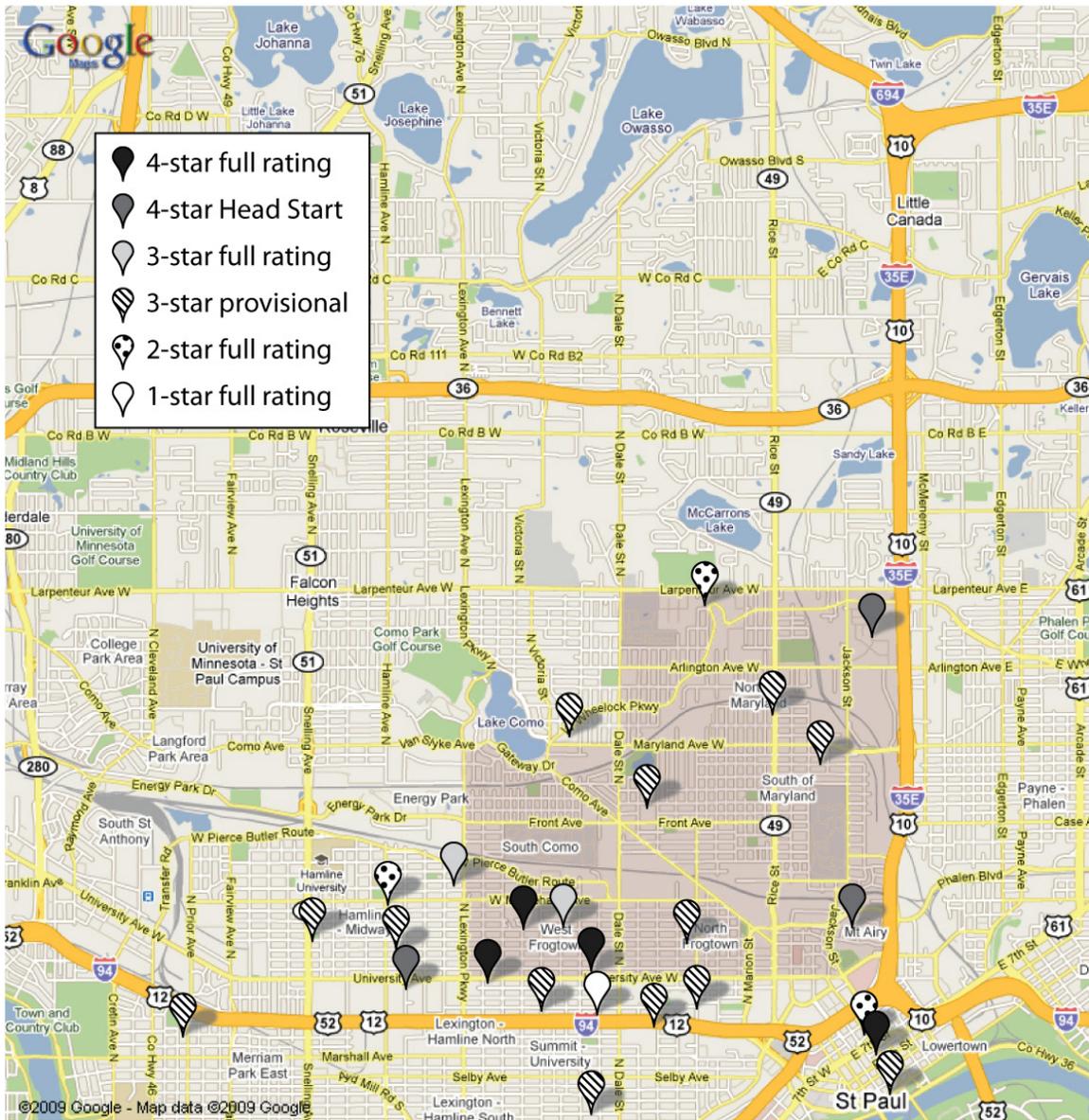
Figures 32a and 32b show the Parent Aware-rated programs (as of December 2008 and December 2010). Displayed are all the rated programs in and near the pilot area and their ratings. Although children can attend programs outside this area, the area was selected because we would expect that (1) parents 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. Figures 32a and 32b show the following:

- The number of programs participating in Parent Aware in and near the pilot area, including those listed as being in the process of obtaining their rating, increased 46% between 2008 and 2010, from 35 to 51 programs.
- The proportion of programs receiving a rating of 3 or 4, indicating high quality, increased from 85% (22 of 26 programs) in 2008 to 94% (29 of 31 programs) in 2009, but decreased in 2010 (83%, 34 of 41 programs).
 - 18 programs increased their rating from one year to another, although this is accounted for in part by a policy decision in 2009 that automatically changed the 10 school-based programs from 3-star provisional to 4-star ratings.²¹
 - Head Start sites received an automatic 4-star rating because programs accredited by an approved body and Head Start programs that are in compliance with the Program Review Instrument for Systems (PRISM) can apply for an automatic 4-star rating in Parent Aware.
- In 2010, seven of 41 programs (17%) received a rating of 1 or 2; three of these programs were family child care programs and the other four were nonprofit center-based programs.²²
- Between 2008 and 2010, 18 programs increased their rating and 10 programs became rated for the first time.
- In December 2010, nine programs were in the process of becoming rated.
- Three programs, which had 2- or 3-star ratings in 2008 or 2009, discontinued participation in Parent Aware before December 2010.

²¹ Definitions of the four rating categories are contained in a report about the evaluation of Parent Aware conducted by Child Trends, available on the MELF website (<http://melf.us>), *Parent Aware Year 1 Evaluation Report*.

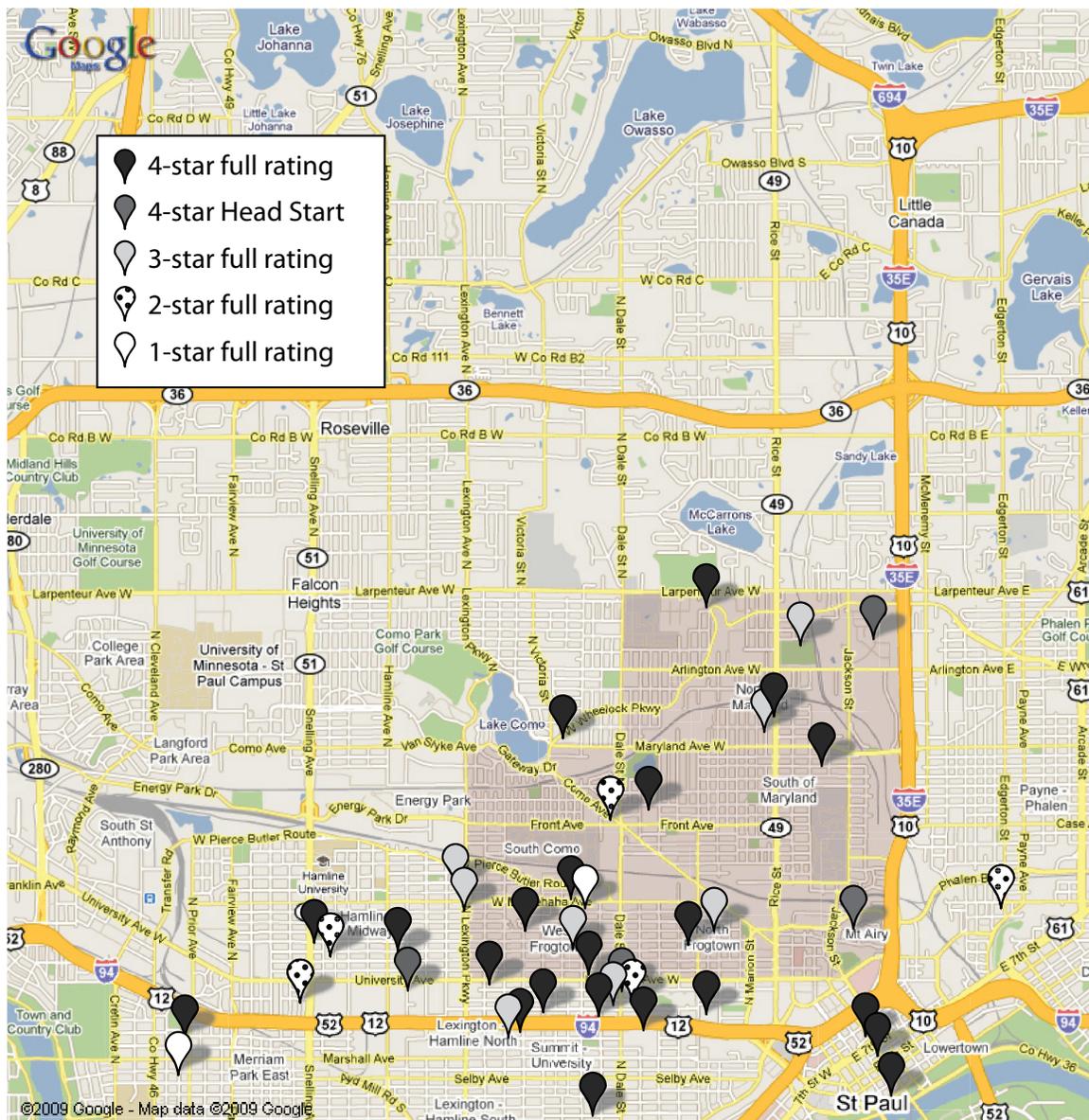
²² In 2008, 15% (four of 26 programs) had 1- or 2-star ratings; three were family child care, one was a nonprofit. In 2009, only two of 31 programs (6%) received a rating of 1 or 2 stars; one of these programs was a family child care program and the other a nonprofit center-based program.

Figure 32a. Location of Parent Aware-Rated ECE Programs In and Near Districts 6 and 7 and Parent Aware Ratings, as of December 2008



Note. These are the 26 programs in and near the original pilot area of districts 6 and 7. Ten school-based programs that had 3-star provisional ratings on this map were upgraded to 4-star ratings in 2009 due to a policy decision, not to a measured change in quality. This change is reflected on the following map.

Figure 32b. Location of Parent Aware-Rated ECE Programs In and Near Districts 6 and 7 and Parent Aware Ratings, as of December 2010



Note. These are the 41 programs in and near the original pilot area of districts 6 and 7. Ten school-based programs that had 3-star provisional ratings on the previous map were upgraded to 4-star ratings in 2009 due to a policy decision, not to a measured change in quality.

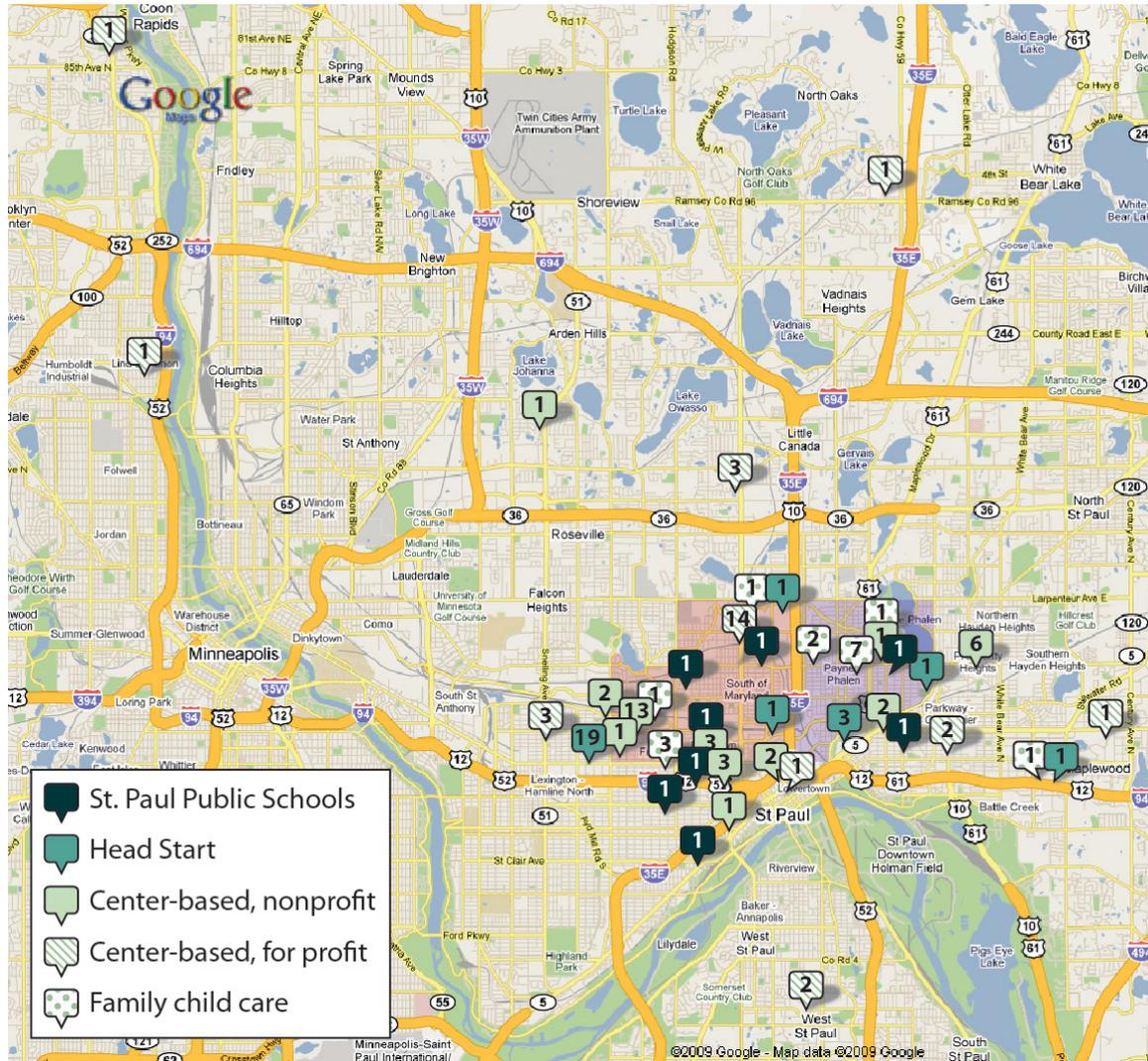
ECE Programs Selected by Children and Families with Scholarship Funds During 2008, 2009, and 2010

Figure 33 shows the location of Parent Aware-rated programs that children attended using their scholarship funds (as of December 2010). See Appendix B for maps of program locations in 2008 and 2009.

- Between December 2008 and December 2009, the number of children participating in the Scholarship Program more than tripled, increasing from 81 to 257 children, attending 15 programs in 2008 and 47 programs in 2009.²³
- Of the 15 programs that children attended in 2008, 11 (73%) were in the pilot area. However, by 2010, of the 44 programs that children attended, only 20 (45%) were in the pilot area.
- Another way to analyze the location of the ECE programs that children attended is to look at the percentage of children who attended programs outside of the original pilot area. In 2008, 10% of the children (8 of 81) attended high-quality ECE programs outside of the defined pilot areas. In 2009, more than one-fourth (70 of 257, 27%) attended programs outside the original pilot area. In 2010, nearly two-fifths (45 of 114, 39%) attended programs outside the original pilot area. These variations in program location may reflect mobility of families, but could also reflect the flexibility families had in choosing a high-quality program regardless of location (i.e., children could use their scholarship outside of the pilot area as long as the program was a 3- or 4-star rated program in Parent Aware).
 - These changes in 2009 and 2010 also reflect changes in the catchment area for the Scholarship Program. In 2009, 30 of the 70 children (12% of the total 257) attended 7 programs in zip code 55106, which covers the Payne-Phalen pilot area that began participation in the Scholarship Program in that year. In 2010, 25 of the 45 children (22% of the total 114) attended 10 programs in that zip code.

²³ In 2010, 114 of the 257 children were still participating in the Scholarship Program: 130 children from Cohort 2 had moved on to kindergarten, 2 children from Cohort 3 had tested into kindergarten a year early, and 10 Cohort 3 children had dropped out of the Scholarship Program.

Figure 33. Location of ECE Programs Where Cohort 3 Children Were Using Scholarship Funds, as of September 2010



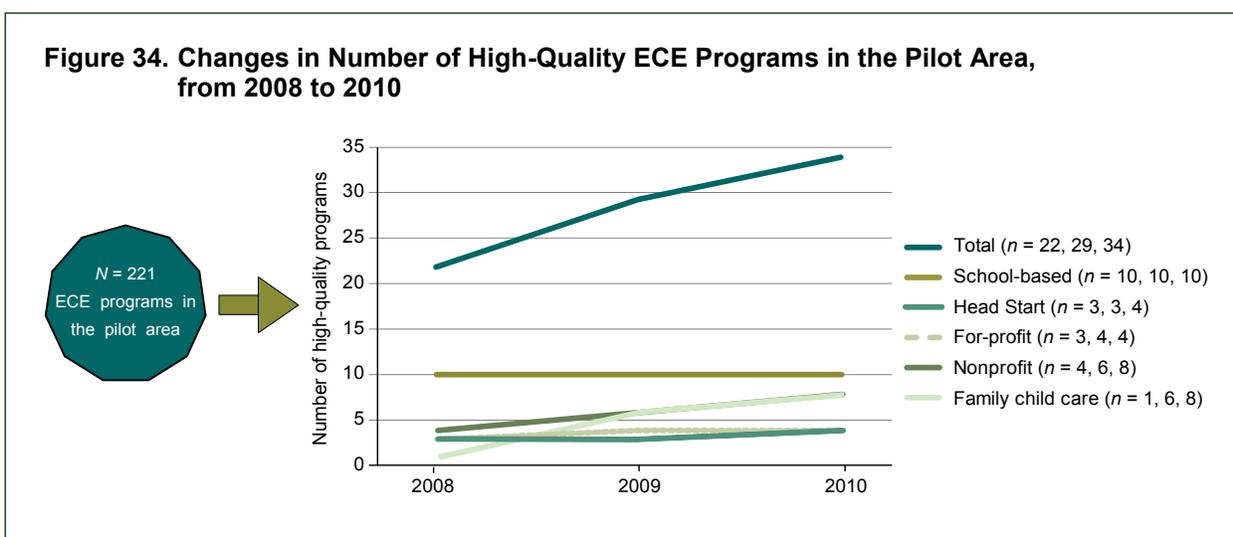
Note. The number inside each marker is the number of scholarship children who attended each program. This map represents the 114 children in Cohort 3 who were still participating in the Scholarship Program as of September 2010.

Summary of ECE Program Supply and Quality

Data showing families' selection of ECE programs over time and ECE programs' participation in Parent Aware provide a window into the market forces that are operating in the pilot area.

Figure 34 shows a summary of changes in supply, including the following:

- At baseline in 2008, 221 programs were licensed to provide care in and near the pilot areas. Prior to the Parent Aware Rating system, the only indicator of quality was licensure, which only provides information about whether the program is compliant with very basic health and safety standards. We used this number as a proxy for available programs that were eligible to participate in Parent Aware and subsequently enroll children with scholarship funds if the program was deemed high quality.
- In September 2008, 22 programs were deemed high-quality and had 95 available slots to accommodate children with scholarship funds. In September 2010, 34 programs were deemed high-quality and had 192 available slots to accommodate children with scholarship funds. Thus, approximately 10 to 15% of possible ECE programs ($N = 221$) in and near the pilot areas were participating in Parent Aware.



- High-quality ECE program supply (as defined by the number of programs) increased over the first 2 years of the Scholarship Program implementation, with family child care programs increasing the most.
- ECE programs' participation in Parent Aware increased from 2008 to 2010.
- Other findings indicate the flexibility in families' choices of programs at which to use scholarship funds (i.e., families could use the scholarship funds in any high-quality program). In 2008, 10% of families were using the scholarship for programs outside of the pilot area, compared to 27% in 2009 and 39% in 2010.²⁴

²⁴ The percentage for 2010 includes only Cohort 3 children whose ECE program was known ($n = 114$), since Cohort 2 children no longer attended ECE programs.

Year 3 Findings: ECE Program Costs and Uses of the Scholarship Program



Part of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program evaluation includes an analysis of the costs associated with providing a high-quality early childhood education, and an analysis of how the pilot programs are using the scholarship funds. This section addresses these two aspects of the evaluation.

Costs associated with providing a high-quality ECE experience

To examine cost data, SRI International contracted with RAND Labor and Population to collect and analyze program expenditure data of programs participating in the Scholarship Program.²⁵ RAND conducted in-person semi-structured interviews with program directors. Twelve of the 47 sites that had received scholarship funding during the program implementation were selected as the sample.²⁶ The programs were selected to represent the variety of types of programs that have received scholarship funds. Specifically, the sample was selected to include each type of participating program – family child care programs, for-profit and nonprofit centers, Head Start, and public school preschools – and each type of program structure – full-day and half-day programs that operate year-round or for the academic year. These 12 programs collectively served two-thirds of the total children whose families received a scholarship in 2010.

Information was gathered using a modified version of the resource cost model approach²⁷ and included information about each site’s expenditures, staffing, program structure and other in-kind resources such as volunteer hours, donated supplies or subsidized building space. Data were also gathered regarding each site’s services. Services and program features varied across the 12 sites, from hours of operation to the types of services available, such as transportation, vision and hearing screening, mental health consultation, literacy coaching, and other services. Site enrollment size varied from under 20 children to over 100 children.

These data, together with information regarding revenue sources for each of the sites (scholarship payments, government subsidies, donations, parent fees), were analyzed to using a modified version understand the costs involved with serving a child at each of the various types of programs, and the revenue sources. The following is a summary of findings regarding costs and site features:

²⁵ For more information, refer to the RAND Labor and Population technical report, and the RAND Labor and Population research brief, available at http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR947.html and http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9581.html.

²⁶ In total, 33 programs received scholarship funding. Some programs provided ECE services at multiple sites, bringing the total number of sites to 47.

²⁷ The resource cost model approach accounts for the value of all the “ingredients” or resources used to provide the program’s services, including ingredients that incur cash costs (e.g., paid staff, rent, and utilities), as well as ingredients that are provided in kind (e.g., volunteer labor, donated space, or subsidized utilities).

- The cost for serving each child ranged from \$7,010 to \$25,603 per year (based on full-time enrollment, which varied in definition based on each site's hours of operation). Hourly per-child costs ranged from \$3.47 to \$19.06 per hour. Family child care programs and for-profit center-based programs had the lowest costs, and nonprofit center-based programs, Head Start and public school-based programs had the highest costs, with half-day Head Start centers and half-day public school-based programs having the highest per hour per-child costs.
- The majority of cost differences between family child care programs and for-profit center-based programs, and nonprofit center-based programs, Head Start and public school-based programs, respectively, were attributable to differences in the number of non-classroom staff employed at each site. The Head Start, public school centers and nonprofit centers were more likely to provide a wide range of services such as parent coaches, parent coordinators, or other services, which resulted in higher per-child costs.²⁸

The following is a summary of the revenue sources:

- At least half of the children enrolled at each of the 12 sites were receiving financial assistance.²⁹ In contrast, a 2006 survey of child care programs in the metro-area found that 10% of enrollees qualified for the state's child care assistance program (Policy Studies Inc., 2006). Thus, the 12 programs surveyed served a poorer-than-average population.
- Most of the sites relied on scholarship funds, government subsidies, donations, or other forms of support for the majority of their revenue, with only one site deriving the majority of its revenue from parent fees (Table 6).
- Nine out of twelve of the sampled sites were receiving scholarship funds at the time the data were gathered; of these sites, scholarship funds accounted for one to 79 percent of total revenue.

²⁸ For a full breakdown of costs and program features, refer to the RAND Labor and Population technical report, and the RAND Labor and Population research brief, available at http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR947.html.

²⁹ Financial assistance could include government subsidies such as CCAP funds, or other forms of assistance.

Table 6. Sources of Support for Sampled ECE Sites Participating in the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program

	Family child care homes		For-profit centers			Nonprofit centers			Head Start centers			Public pre-schools
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Share of revenue and other support (%)												
Scholarship payments	79	9	1	8	36	14	4	11	0	25	0	0
Government subsidies (includes CCAP, federal funds, etc.)	21	19	76	**	45	30	9	8	88	69	86	100
Parent fees	1	63	11	**	9	6	42	30	0	0	0	0
Donations *	0	9	11	**	9	50	45	51	12	6	14	0

Notes. To further protect the anonymity of the programs, they are sorted at random within their program type in this table. Support shares may not add to 100 because of rounding.

SOURCE: Authors' analysis of data collected from 12 programs.

* Includes grants as well as donated space and services.

** Information not available, or not available at a disaggregated level and included with another line item. The program aggregates all of the sources of support and could not report the share for the separate sources. See full report for more detail.

† Payments to part day Head Start and Saint Paul Public Schools were discontinued on September 1, 2009.

Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Programs' Use of Scholarship Funds

SRI administered a survey to the 33 participating programs representing 47 sites to obtain information on how scholarship funds were used.³⁰ Of those programs that received a survey, 27 programs (82%) responded: Head Start (7%), for profit center-based programs (26%), nonprofit center-based programs (48%), public school-based programs (4%) and family child care programs (15%). Below are highlights of the overall survey results:

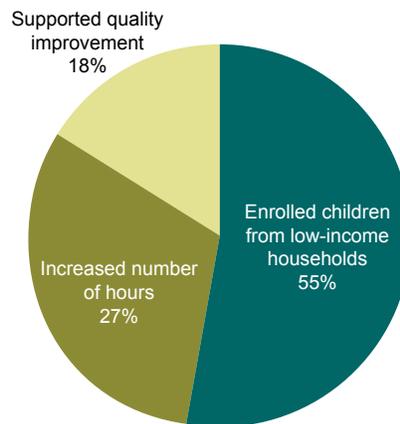
- 78% of the programs used scholarship funds to enroll children from low-income households.
- 74% of the programs used scholarship funds to support quality improvements.
- 63% of the programs used scholarship funds to serve more children.
- 56% of the programs used scholarship funds to serve children with different demographic characteristics (e.g., children whose families had recently immigrated) than they had previously served.
- 48% of the programs used scholarship funds to increase the number of hours children could attend.
- 26% of programs noted in an open-ended comment section of the survey that the scholarship funds supported children being able to stay enrolled in high-quality programs even as family circumstances or income changed.

The survey also captured the *primary* ways in which the scholarship funds were used (Figure 35):

³⁰ The full Brief Report can be found at www.melf.us.

- About half of the programs (55%) used the scholarship funds primarily to enroll children from low-income households who would not have otherwise been able to enroll in their program.
- One-third of the programs (27%) primarily used the funds to increase the number of hours children attended.
- 18% used the funds primarily to support quality improvement efforts.

Figure 35. Primary uses of the Scholarship Funds by ECE Programs (*n* = 22)



Data were also gathered regarding the programs’ use of quality grant funds. The scholarship amount is based on the number of hours a child attends an ECE program (minimum of 12 hours up to 35 or more hours per week) and the type of program selected (center-based or licensed family child care) minus CCAP funds paid (as applicable). The annual scholarship amount for a center-based program ranges from about \$5,000 for 12 hours per week for a school-year (36 weeks) to \$13,000 for 35+ hours per week year-round. The annual scholarship amount for a family child care program is \$9,360 for 35+ hours per week.

The scholarship funds are divided into two main parts: tuition payment (equal to the amount private-pay families are charged) and quality grant. The amount of a quality grant fund is the difference between the scholarship amount and the tuition amount. No family co-payment was charged except in a relatively few cases where ECE programs charged tuition that is more than the scholarship amount. Publicly funded programs like Head Start and Saint Paul Public Schools did not receive quality grant funds, as tuition payments equaled the scholarship amount.³¹ Thus, 26 of the 41 sites (62%) reported receiving quality grants during fiscal year 2009–10 (Figure 36).³²

³¹ Head Start used scholarship funds to support full day, year-round services and programming for children attending their full day sites. Head Start also used scholarship funds to provide a summer school program for children attending their part day sites. Saint Paul Public Schools used scholarship funds to support professional development efforts (e.g., early childhood coach to support teachers in implementing developmentally appropriate curricula).

³² One program had not spent the quality grant funds yet.

The following is a summary of how programs used the quality grants:³³

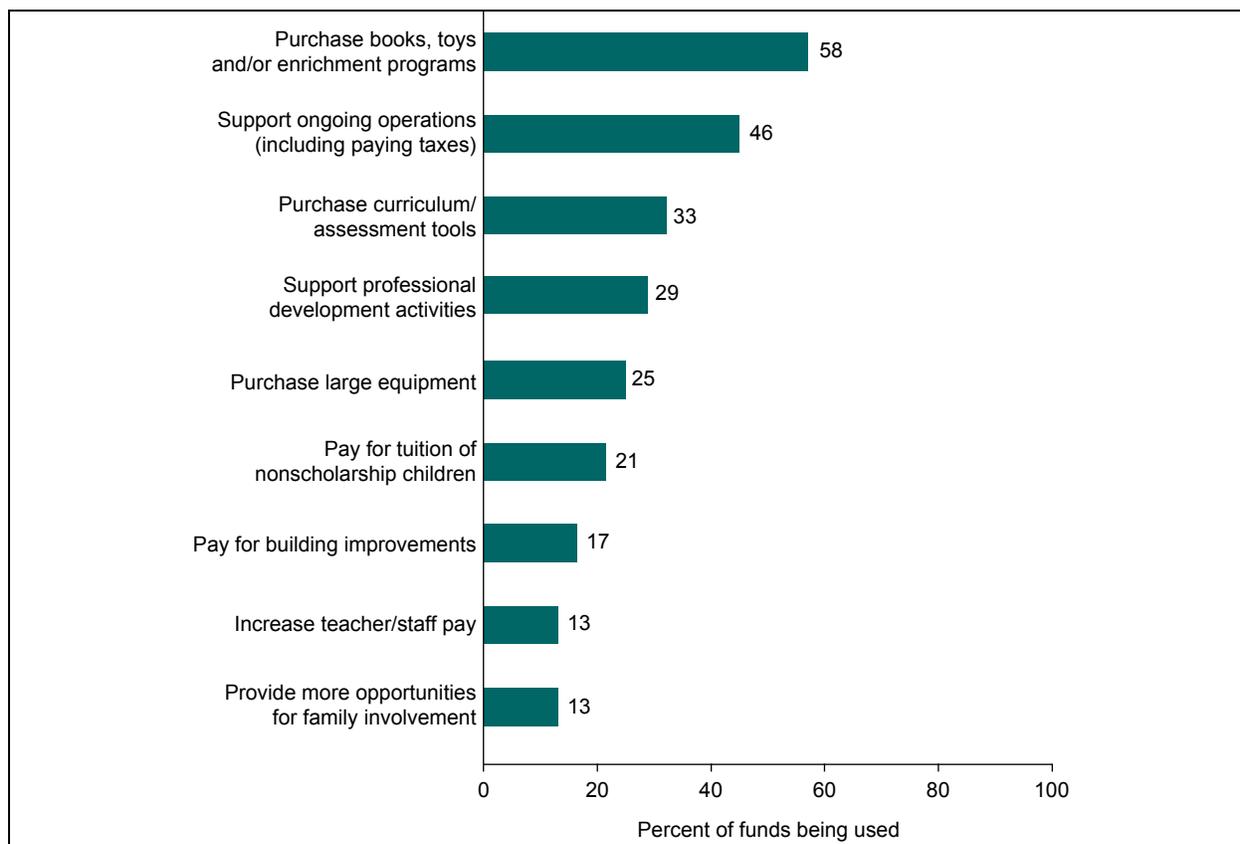
- 58% of the programs used quality grant funds to purchase books and toys or provide enrichment activities, such as tutoring, to improve the learning environment.
- 46% of the programs used the funds to support ongoing operations, including staff salaries, supplies and taxes.
- 33% of the programs used the funds to purchase curriculum and assessment tools.
- 21% of the programs used the funds to cover the tuition for non-scholarship children.

Of note, the programs' use of quality grant funds mirror some of the quality indicators set forth by Parent Aware. In order to qualify as "high-quality," a program must obtain at least 3 out of 4 possible stars. In evaluating programs, Parent Aware looks at 4 categories: family partnerships (evaluates how well programs communicate with and prepare parents for their child's transition); teaching materials and strategies (looks at overall environmental quality, teacher-child interactions, and whether a program uses evidence-based curriculum); tracking learning (looks at whether programs use research-based assessment tools to assess children, and whether the programs inform parents of the results and set goals); and teacher training and education (looks at education levels and professional development plans for a program's staff).³⁴ Many of the sampled programs indicate that they used the extra quality grant funds to improve their programs in ways that Parent Aware are consistent with quality.

³³ The Scholarship Program did not prescribe how programs used the quality grant funds; how programs used the funds was at the program's discretion.

³⁴ Tout, Kathryn. (2010). *Parent Aware: Minnesota's pilot quality rating and improvement system (QRIS): Key findings from the year 3 evaluation report* [power point presentation slides]. Retrieved from <http://www.melf.us>.

Figure 36. Uses of Quality Grant Funds by ECE Programs at Sites (n = 26 sites)

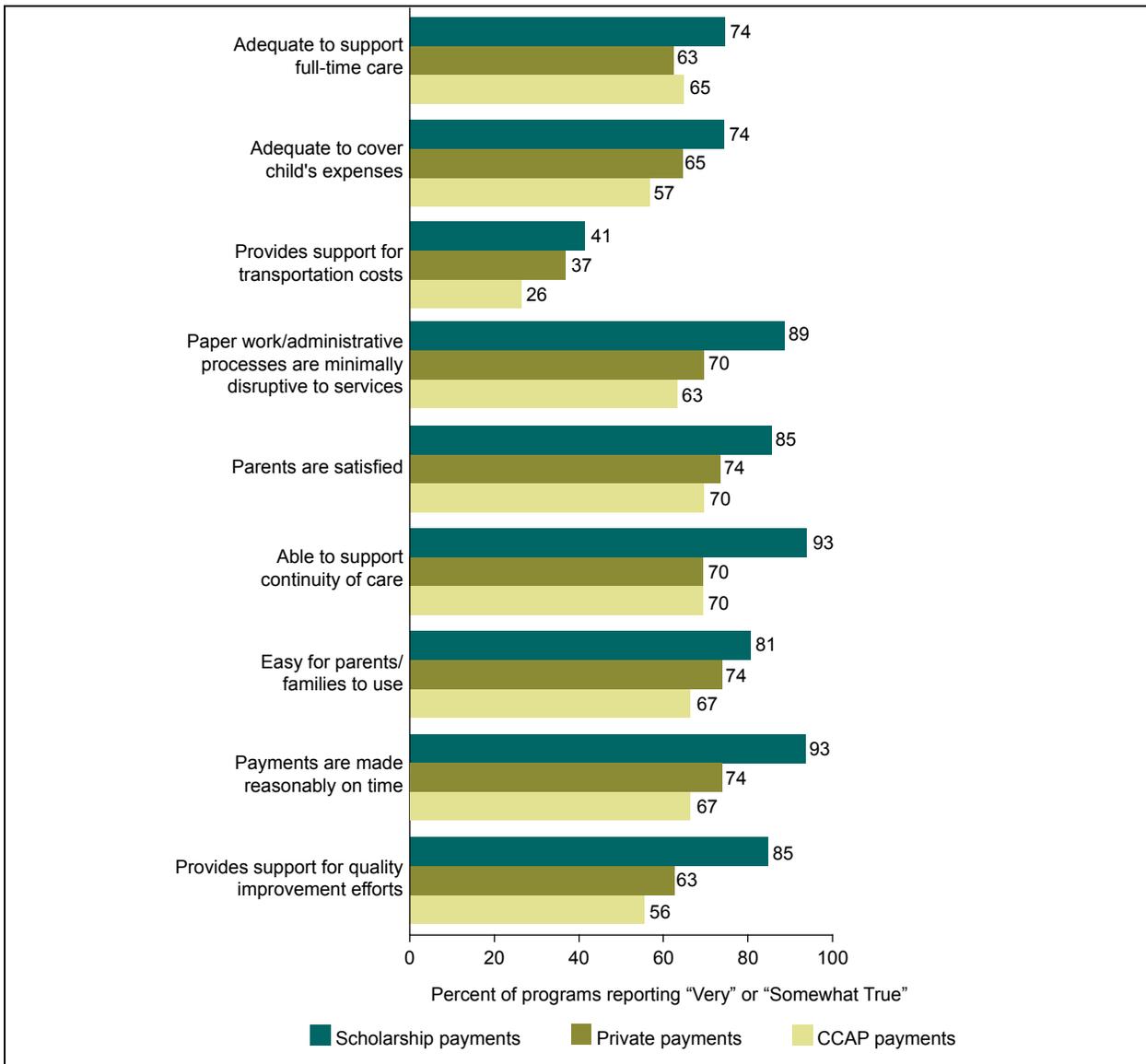


Perceived Benefits of the Scholarship Payment Process

Programs provided ratings that show perceptions of the relative benefits of scholarships, private payments, and CCAP payments as funding methods (Figure 37).

- All programs view the scholarship payment method more favorably than the CCAP method.
 - Almost all programs (89%) viewed the scholarship payment method as minimally disruptive to services compared to only 70% for private payments and 63% CCAP payments.
 - The scholarship payment method was also seen as a better way to support continuity of care (i.e., allow children to stay enrolled in high-quality programs even as family circumstances or income change).
 - The CCAP payment method was viewed by programs as a challenging system for both their families and for program administrators to navigate. It was less likely to support full-time care (65%) compared to scholarship (74%); and it was the least likely to cover child’s expenses (57%) compared to scholarship (74%) and private payments (65%).
 - Respondents also were less likely to report that payments were made on-time for CCAP (67%) compared to scholarship (93%) and private payments (74%).

Figure 37. Reported Benefits of Scholarship Funds by ECE Programs (n = 27 programs)



Summary

As described above, the costs associated with providing a high-quality ECE experience varied widely from site to site, with Head Start and public school-based centers having the highest annual cost and hourly costs per child. RAND attributes these differences at least partially to the increased number of non-teacher staff available at Head Start and public school-based centers. Of the sampled sites, revenue sources also varied widely, but overall, at least half of the students served by the 12 sites were low-income, which is consistent with the finding that most of the sites relied heavily on scholarships, donations and funds other than parent fees to support their programs.

Programs used the scholarship funds in multiple ways, but primary uses included increasing enrollment and improving quality: enrolling children from low income homes (55%), extending hours (27%), and improving program quality (15%). Quality grant funds, in particular, were often allocated to expanding access for low income children or quality-improvement measures, such as improving the learning environment (58%), purchasing curriculum and assessment tools (33%), and covering the tuition for non-scholarship children (21%).

Year 3 Findings: Qualitative Data About Implementation



Perspectives from Participating Parents

Additional information was obtained from conducting focus groups with participating parents in the summer and fall of 2010.

- How did participating parents perceive the benefits of the Scholarship Program?
- What benefits did they perceive from their children's participation in a high-quality ECE program?
- What kinds of information did parents use to choose an ECE program for their children? Are parents using Parent Aware to inform their decisionmaking in selecting an ECE program for their child?
- Did the availability of a scholarship influence their choice of program for their child? Did it influence their ideas about their child's education?

Four focus groups³⁵ were held (between August and November 2010) with parents who had children who were participating in the Scholarship Program. We asked parents about their experiences in learning about and participating in the scholarship program (i.e., experiences with their parent mentors and in choosing an ECE program, and perceived impacts of the scholarship program on their children and families to date). Among the key findings, which were similar to those from focus groups conducted in 2009, were the following:

- Parents learned about the scholarship program in several different ways.
 - The most common (75%) sources were parent mentors, home visitors, or case managers from CCAP, or letters from the mayor's office.
 - Word of mouth was another way parents heard about the scholarship program. For example, parents mentioned hearing about the program through friends, family, or coworkers (13%).
 - Many parents also mentioned receiving brochures or seeing fliers or advertisements for the program at locations like the WIC office, a clinic, or their child's ECE program (13%).
- Most parents described that they were participating in the scholarship program because it was simple to apply for, to choose ECE programs, and to maintain their child in the ECE program without ongoing paperwork to recertify the child's eligibility status.

³⁵ Group size of the four focus groups ranged from 2 to 7 parents, for a total of 19 parents or relatives representing 18 families. At three of four programs, parents had 4-year-old children who had been in the scholarship program for about 1 year. Parents at the fourth program had children who were a year older and were starting kindergarten in fall of 2010. Thus, the 2010 focus groups included more parents/families from Cohort 3 than Cohort 2.

- In describing the simplicity of participating in the scholarship program, several parents contrasted it with CCAP (Minnesota’s Child Care Assistance Program), describing the difficulties of participating in CCAP, including the need to complete a lot of paperwork on a regular basis, having long waiting lists, some as long as 2 to 3 years, and having trouble consistently staying eligible (e.g., some parents described the experience of being laid off from their jobs due to the poor economy, but the advantage of being able to keep the child in his ECE program, which would not have been possible with CCAP).
- Some parents noted that because the scholarship funds are guaranteed, participation provided them with school and work opportunities.
 - For example, three parents described how they had more flexibility in combining work and school with the scholarship compared with CCAP requirements. The scholarship also maintained the child’s full-day programming.
- In fact, several parents commented that the scholarship funds allowed them to access a full-day program for their child.
 - In one focus group, all parents were either working and/or going to school during the day. One parent in particular described the difficulty of using CCAP because it did not fund enough hours of child care to allow her to be in school and still work enough hours to qualify for CCAP funding.
- When we asked where their children would be if they did not have the scholarship program, most of the parents described that the child would likely be at home (e.g., “at home, running around all day”) or with friends or relatives (e.g., “being passed around from friend to friend”).
- About half of the parents who were asked about parent mentoring reported that they had worked with a parent mentor at least once. The number of home visits by parent mentors and how they helped families varied considerably (e.g., from a few visits to visits for about 1 year in duration).
- Regardless of the number of parent mentor home visits received, most of the parents expressed strong positive opinions about the parent mentors, noting that they were incredibly beneficial to their children and families.
 - Many parents described the books and other materials (e.g., backpacks, “she would bring a lot of books”) that parent mentors provided were helping their children “learn their letters,” “write their names,” and “be ready for school.”
- Almost all of the parents described the process of finding an ECE program as easy.
 - Many of the parents knew which ECE program they wanted their child to attend either because of the ECE program’s reputation, word of mouth, and/or previous experience or because the child’s sibling had attended the ECE program.
 - Parents also secondarily described aspects of ECE programs that they needed to consider, mainly including location, transportation, and provision of full-day care.
- All of the parents knew their children attended a high-quality, “star-rated” ECE program, and understood that the scholarship program required that the ECE program selected was of high quality.

- When asked to describe what they liked about their child’s ECE program, parents described ECE program features that they either learned about the program before enrolling or observed first-hand once their child began attending the ECE program. These features included the following:
 - **Curriculum and early learning environments.** Many parents noted that they liked the ECE program because it was “like a school,” with “a school-like atmosphere, academics with play is what makes the difference.” They also noted that it was preparing their children for kindergarten (e.g., “they teach him how to write his name”). Some parents liked the “curriculum” and others described the learning environment (“it’s a structured learning environment”; “they teach the kids, it’s not just child care”) that helped achieve better outcomes for their children (“he is talking and discussing things, showing interest in learning more” “she can write her name, knows colors, shapes, sounds, numbers, math.” All of the bilingual families expressed being pleased at how well the ECE programs had helped their children learn English.
 - **Caring and compassionate teachers and staff who help children with social and behavioral skills and whom their children like.** Many parents made comments about how well the teachers and staff interacted with the children and supported their social, emotional, and learning styles. For example, one parent noted that “my son is more confident; before he went to school, he was shy, quiet, scared.” Another parent described how the teachers promoted her child’s independence and behavior, “she brought my child back,” noting that the child had frequent behavioral outbursts, for which the teacher used a “positive approach” to help the child manage his behavior better. Another parent commented that the child’s “social skills and manners have developed; my daughter is telling me that when I sneeze I have to say excuse me.” Many parents described how their children really liked their teachers, talked about them at home, and were often eager to return to school every day.
 - **Parent involvement.** Parents appreciated that the ECE programs allowed them to come to the program and observe. As one parent commented “it’s a friendly atmosphere, everyone is welcome.” Communication from the program to parents was important.
 - **Location and transportation.** Many parents commented that the location of the ECE program was important to them. Many parents described the fact that their child’s ECE program was within walking distance of their home or on a convenient bus line. One parent needed an ECE program with a bus that would allow her to continue to go to high school.
- Across all four focus groups, parents were hesitant to describe any negative aspects of the ECE program. Parents did, however, identify activities they would like to have added to their child’s ECE program, including (1) more emphasis on writing skills, (2) field trips, and, (3) transportation.
- Mirroring the results from the 2009 parent focus groups, none of the parents reported that they had heard of Parent Aware. After the facilitator then briefly described the Parent Aware rating system, some parents thought they used the website or a similar one (e.g., the program’s website), and many commented that their child’s program had “four or five stars.”

- Parents made a number of closing comments that suggested their universal support and gratitude for the scholarship program as well as their keen awareness of the importance of high-quality ECE programs in supporting their children’s learning and school readiness.
 - Many parents made comments about how much they value their participation in the scholarship program and understand the importance of high-quality ECE programs in supporting their children’s learning and development (both pre-academic and social) and school readiness.
 - One parent shared that she felt that without the ECE program that her child attended with the scholarship funds, her child would probably have been diagnosed with an emotional or behavioral disorder and in need of enrolling in special education. She described seeing a “night and day” difference in her child’s behavior since starting preschool.
 - Parents also talked about how the scholarship program has benefitted them directly by allowing them to attend school and/or search for work without worrying about their CCAP eligibility.

Summary and Next Steps



The data described in this third annual report cover 3 years of implementation of the scholarship model, child outcomes after 1 year of ECE program attendance, and data about ECE program costs and how ECE programs used scholarship funds. The programs and agencies administering and participating in it have worked hard for the past 3 years to get the program model implemented for five cohorts of children. All three interventions (i.e., parent mentoring, distribution and use of scholarship funds to attend high-quality ECE programs, and the Parent Aware ECE program rating system) in the scholarship model have evolved over the past 3 years and throughout unanticipated budget crises and implementation challenges. The continuing implementation and evaluation of the Saint Paul Scholarship Program model in the pilot community in 2010 has yielded additional and new information about how the model has been operating and the impacts it is producing for children, families, programs, and the pilot community.

Process Evaluation in 2011

In 2011, SRI will continue to collect data about how implementation is progressing. These activities include interviews and focus groups with participants at all levels (e.g., funders, administrators, ECE program directors, parent mentors, parents) and will include, among others, the following questions:

- Over the entire implementation, how did the Scholarship Program affect how parents and programs are making decisions, how programs served children and changed their practices, and the children and families served?
- What lessons have been learned about implementation that should be heeded in any future replications of the scholarship model?
- Why have some ECE programs in and near the pilot areas chosen not to participate in Parent Aware and the scholarship program?
- How did programs see participation in the Scholarship Program as impacting their community? Which changes are likely to be sustained or not after the Scholarship Program ends in 2011 and why?
- What lessons have been learned from the scholarship pilot that should impact future early childhood policy in Minnesota?
- What were the critical features of the scholarship model that participating programs and families recommend to be sustained after the pilot program ends in 2011?

Outcome Evaluation in 2011

Although there was a shortfall in the original expected enrollment, it was still possible to implement a pre-post design. In 2011, in the pre-post design outcome study with approximately 200 children (Cohorts 2 and 3), we will continue to collect child and family data as children in the last cohort of children (Cohort 3) enter kindergarten in fall 2011. Activities will include the following:

- **Child assessment data.** SRI will collect (1) direct child assessments completed in the elementary schools using standardized assessment tools to measure children's cognitive, language, and literacy development (i.e., when the children are 5 years old and enter kindergarten) and (2) teacher checklists about child social competence, behavior, and general development. These data will provide information on the developmental status of 5-year-old children who had scholarship funds as they enter kindergarten to be compared to their developmental status 1 year and 2 years earlier when they were participating in an ECE program.
- **Comparison group child outcome data.** A comparison group of children ($N = 200$) will be assessed at kindergarten entry with the same child assessment battery used with children with scholarships (begun in fall 2010 when the Cohort 2 children entered kindergarten and to be completed in fall 2011 when the Cohort 3 children enter kindergarten).³⁶
- **Parent interview data.** SRI will continue to collect phone interview data 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.

The evaluation team will produce the following additional reports through December 2011:

- Implementation Brief 4 (due September 15, 2011) describing implementation findings between June 2010 and July 2011.³⁷
- Scholarship Program Final Evaluation Report (draft due on November 15, 2011, for review with a technical work group; final report due on December 31, 2011) summarizing final results, including all outcome data through kindergarten entry for the entire sample of children with scholarships.

³⁶ In fall 2010, we collected child outcome data on a total of 55 kindergarten children who did not have scholarships and were attending the same elementary schools as the children who did have scholarships.

³⁷ A one- to two-page fact sheet based on findings from this brief also will be prepared.

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Appendices



- Appendix A. Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Pilot Manual (updated July 2010)
- Appendix B. Maps: ECE Program Locations, 2008 Through 2010
- Appendix C. ECE Program Survey
- Appendix D. Focus Group Protocol

Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Pilot Manual

2010



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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, 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 15th in subsequent years. See Appendix J for clarification.

Address

Families must reside in Saint Paul Planning Districts 6 or 7 at enrollment of program.¹ 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
- Verification by a Public Health nurse
- Selective service registration

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	
\$14,570	\$26,955	2
\$18,310	\$33,874	3
\$22,050	\$40,793	4
\$25,790	\$47,712	5
\$29,530	\$54,631	6
\$33,270	\$61,550	7
\$37,010	\$68,469	8
Add \$3,740 for each additional family member to determine 100% FPG. Multiply this number by 1.85 to determine 185% of FPG.		

* Updated annually Source: Federal Register, Jan. 2009.

¹ For cohort 3 the eligibility area included city planning district 5, the Payne-Phalen neighborhood, in order to facilitate a potential increase in enrollment. However, only a few children were enrolled from this neighborhood.

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's age and address through Ramsey County in lieu of sending in above documents. In addition, a photo copy from Public Health of a list that includes birth dates and addresses can be used as verification.

Children in foster care

Children in the foster care system are eligible to receive scholarships 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 the 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), 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, 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 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, program policies, and program 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 is not 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 21.
- 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 the 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 provides 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 are less likely to select the best setting for their child, and parents are less likely to be as involved in their child's educational experience.²

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 the child and the 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, and 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

² 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.

- screenings
- Education about child development, including health, nutrition and early literacy
- 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 Module³

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

³ Training module developed by RCC and Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network.

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, 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 to 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.⁴

⁴ The payment amounts listed below refer to the amount paid per child. However, there were often more than one scholarship child per family. Therefore, a reduced payment mechanism could be adopted for families with multiple children. For example, families with two scholarship children could be reimbursed at the full amount for the child with the highest level of reimbursement plus half the amount of the child with the lowest level of reimbursement.

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.

Topics:

- 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.

Topics:

- 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 st quarter depending on how many families are served
July 1, 2008	Payment for 2 nd quarter
October 1, 2008	Payment for 3 rd quarter
January 1, 2009	Payment for 4 th 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 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. 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 form 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:

Hours per Week	Weekly Rate	Annual	4-week Reimbursement
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:

35 Hours	Weekly rate	Annual	4-week Reimbursement
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).

Center-based Programs, 18 to 34 Hours per Week			
Hours	Weekly rate	Annual	4-week Reimbursement
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

Family-based Programs, 18 to 34 Hours per Week			
Hours	Weekly rate	Annual	4-week Reimbursement
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.⁵

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).⁶

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.

$$\begin{aligned}
 & (4\text{-week reimbursement rate}) * (\# \text{ of } 4\text{-week blocks}^7 \text{ of scholarship children served}) \\
 & - \text{Tuition payments and CCAP payments received} \\
 = & \text{Quality Grant}
 \end{aligned}$$

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.).

Head Start and public school-based programs

(Note: Beginning Sept. 1, 2009, Head Start and public school-based programs are no longer paid to provide preschool to children enrolled in their half-day programs and Head Start is paid at the same rates as CCAP for children enrolled in its full-day program. However, Head Start and public school-based programs are paid \$50 per child each semester in their half-day programs to defray costs of providing data and facilitating visits by child evaluators. MELF made this change due to fundraising constraints during the economic downturn and since Head Start and public school-based programs had public funds available to provide these services.⁸ See Appendices P and Q.)

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 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:

⁸ A more nuanced approach would include paying Head Start and public school-based programs if they demonstrate that the scholarship funds are used to increase the number of openings at their programs. That is, scholarship funds do not supplant other public funding sources in providing education to scholarship children.

- 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 by Nov. 1, 2011, 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 were funds used to boost quality 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 week 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.

Time limit for child to reenroll in an ECE program after a move

Once a child has been determined to have moved from an ECE program, the family has 60 days to reenroll and have the child start attending at another or the same ECE program. If reenrollment and attending does not begin within 60 days, the child's scholarship ends.

Payments to ECE Programs that drop out of Parent Aware

ECE programs drop out of the Parent Aware system by choosing not to be rerated. If a program chooses not to be rerated, any scholarship payments to that program stop when their rated status has concluded. The Advance payment covers the following two weeks of service to children. After the two-week period, parents have 60 days to find a new program.

Payments to ECE Programs that drop below 3-stars

If an ECE program's rating drops below 3-stars, payments for scholarship children attending the program can continue if the program decides to pursue a rerating. However, new scholarship children will not be allowed to enroll in the program during the rerating process.

If such an ECE program receives a rating below 3-stars after the rerating process, payments to the program stop when the new rating is assigned. The Advance payment covers the following two weeks of service to children. After the two-week period, parents have 60 days to find a new program.

Note that the 60 day period is the time allowed for parents to search for and enroll their child in a new ECE program. If a child is not enrolled in a new program within 60 days, the family loses the scholarship.

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 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 Parent Aware
- Provide specified child information to parent mentor as needed
- 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.

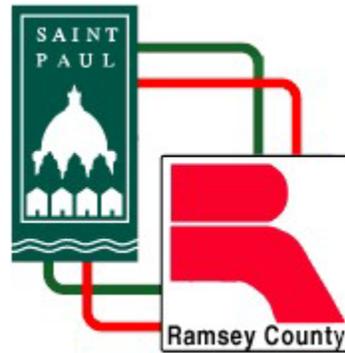
Parent Aware: Provides ratings of early child care and education programs and also provides resources to programs to improve quality. The 3-year pilot of the Parent Aware Rating Tool will include licensed child care providers/early educators in five locations: Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties, the City 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.

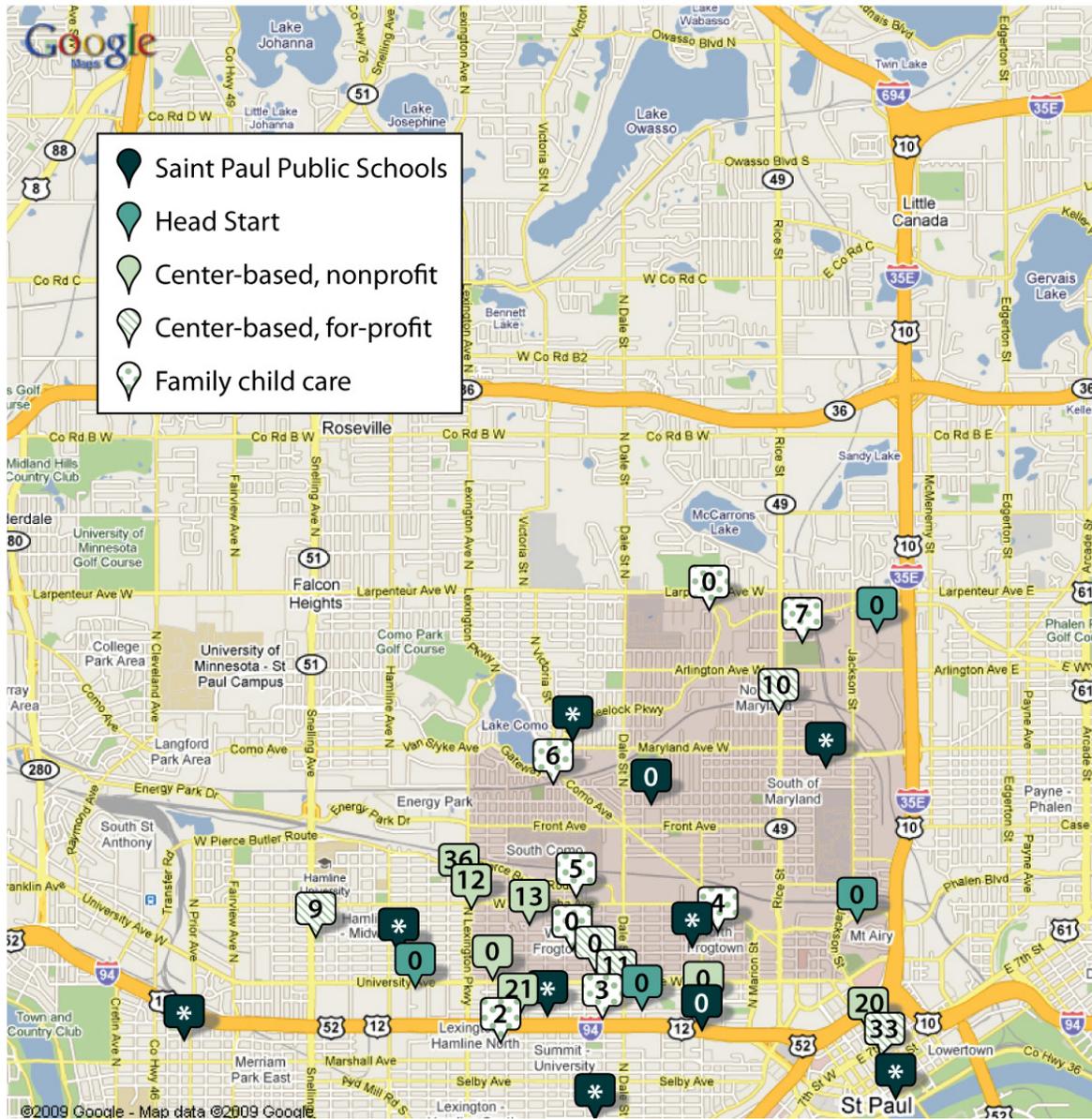


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Appendix B

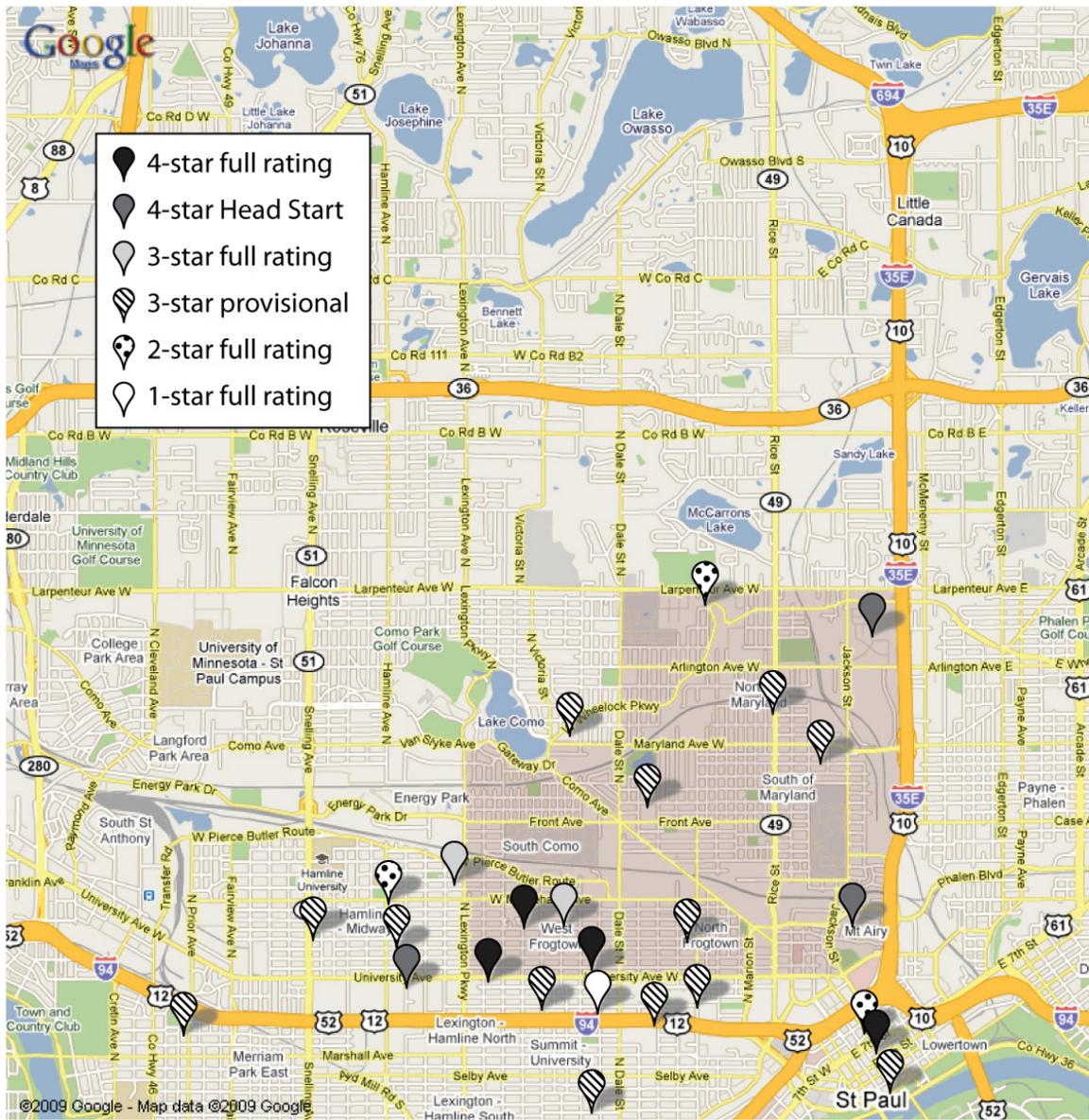
Maps: ECE Program Locations, 2008 Through 2010

Location of 3- and 4-Star Programs in and near Districts 6 and 7 and Vacant Slots, September 2010



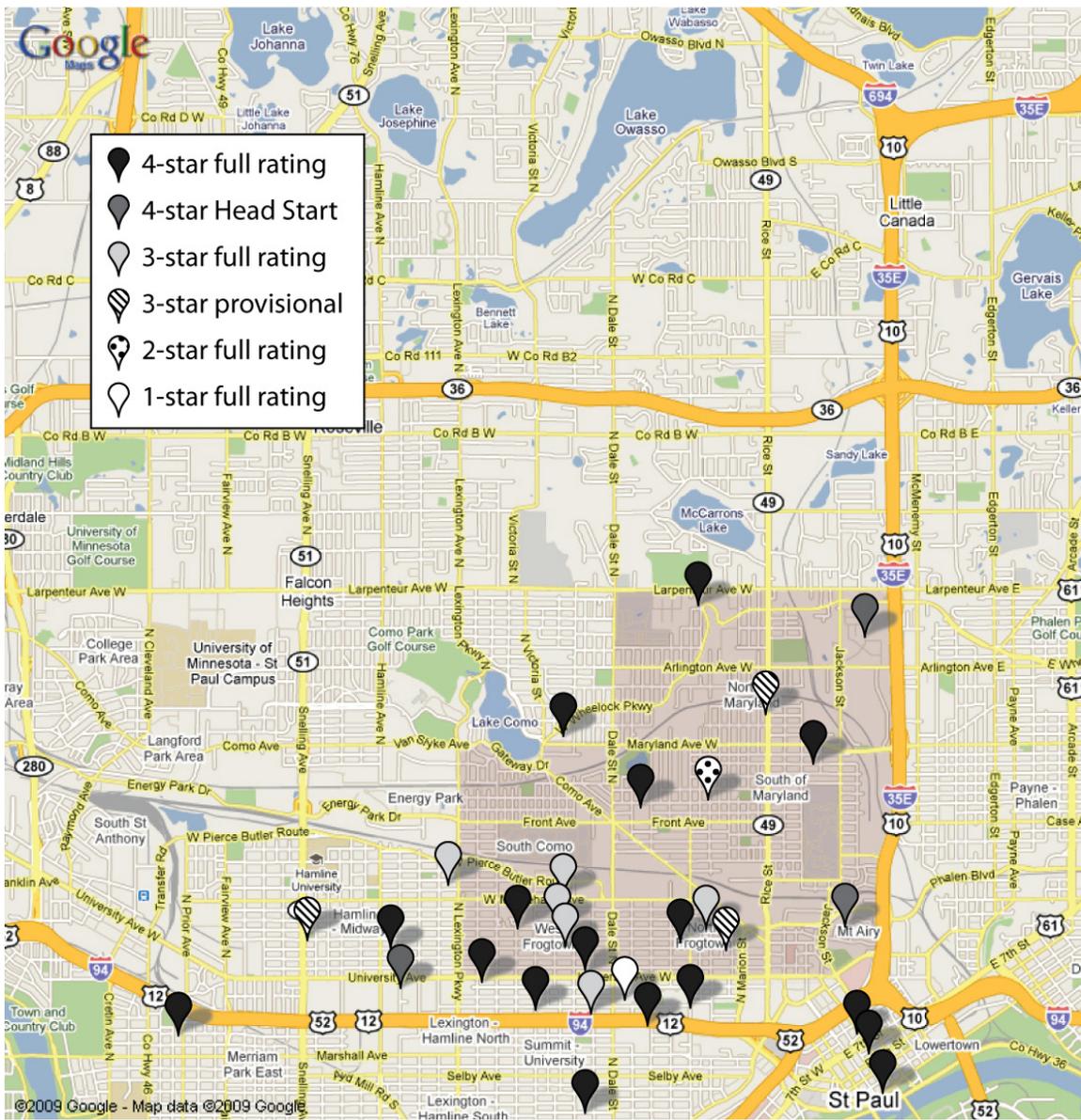
Note. The number inside each marker is the number of vacancies at the program in September 2010. The total number of vacancies across all programs shown on this map is 192 slots.

Location of Parent Aware-Rated ECE Programs in and near Districts 6 and 7 and Parent Aware Ratings, as of December 2008



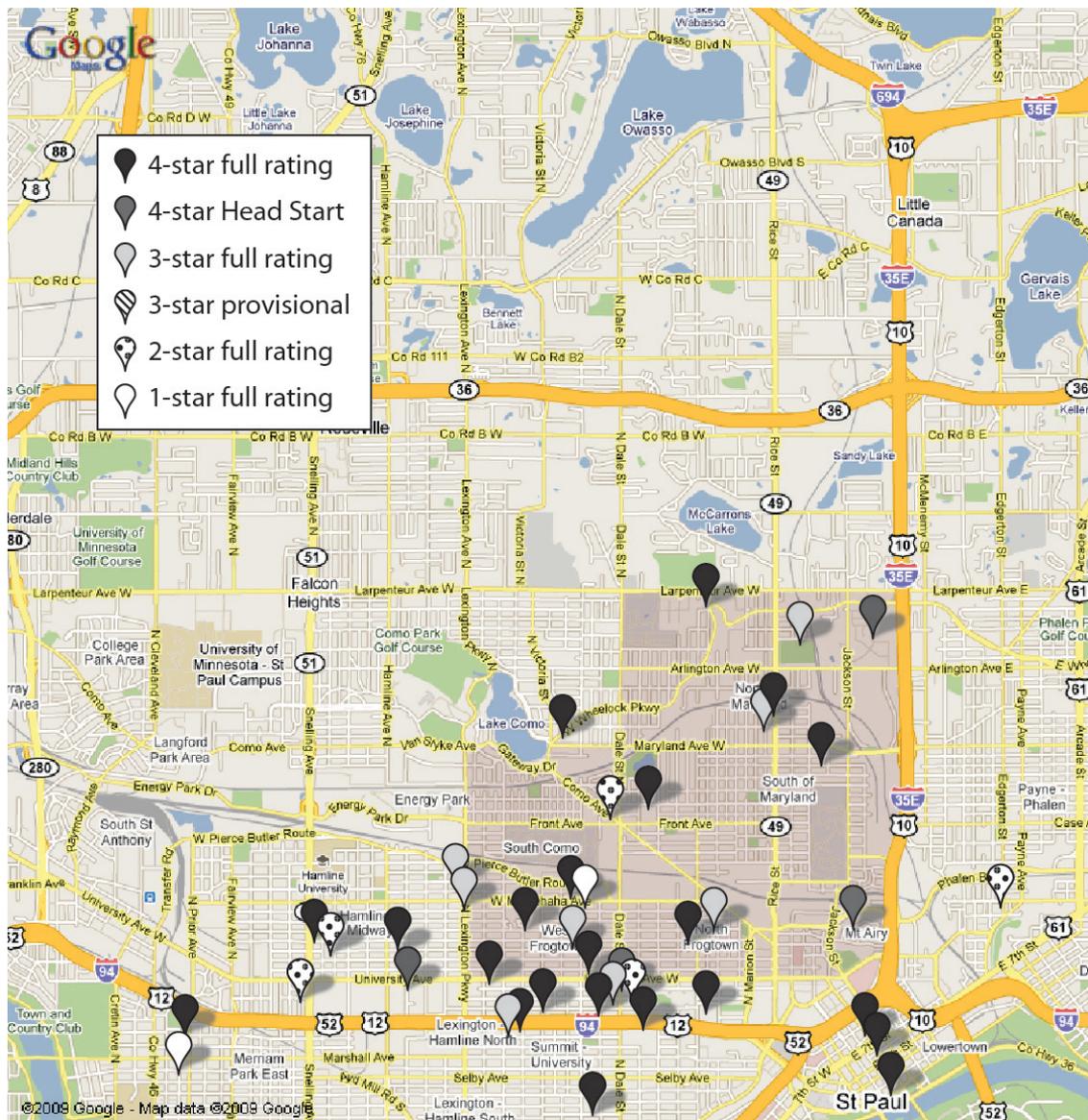
Note. These are the 26 programs in and near the original pilot area of districts 6 and 7. Ten school-based programs that are rated 3-star provisional on this map were upgraded to 4-stars in 2009 due to a policy decision, not to a measured change in quality. This change is reflected on the following map.

Location of Parent Aware-Rated ECE Programs in and near Districts 6 and 7 and Parent Aware Ratings, as of December 2009



Note. These are the 31 programs in and near the original pilot area of districts 6 and 7.

Location of Parent Aware-Rated ECE Programs in and near Districts 6 and 7 and Parent Aware Ratings, as of December 2010



Note. These are the 41 programs in and near the original pilot area of districts 6 and 7.



Appendix C: MELF Saint Paul Scholarship Program ECE Program Survey



- Please take 10 minutes to complete this short survey that will help us better understand how the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF) Scholarship Program impacted your program.
- The information that you share will be kept confidential and will not affect your participation in the scholarship or any other program. Please do not use any identifying information (for example, children’s or families’ names) in this survey.
- As a small thank you for completing this survey, we will send you a \$20 gift certificate.

Different Payment Methods

1. Indicate how true the following statements are for the scholarship payment method and amount:

	Very True	Somewhat True	Somewhat Not True	Not True At All
The payment method provides support for quality improvement efforts and resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Payments are made reasonably on-time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The payment method is easy for parents/families to use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The payment method is able to support continuity of children's care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents are satisfied with the payment method.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paperwork and other administrative processes of the payment method are minimally disruptive to services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The payment method supports transportation costs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The amount provided is adequate to cover child's expenses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The amount provided is adequate to support children's full-time care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Indicate how true the following statements are for the **Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) payment method and amount**: If your program never has children with this payment method, you may skip this section.

	Very True	Somewhat True	Somewhat Not True	Not True At All
The payment method provides support for quality improvement efforts and resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Payments are made reasonably on-time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The payment method is easy for parents/families to use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The payment method is able to support continuity of children's care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents are satisfied with the payment method.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paperwork and other administrative processes of the payment method are minimally disruptive to services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The payment method supports transportation costs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The amount provided is adequate to cover child's expenses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The amount provided is adequate to support children's full-time care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Indicate how true the following statements are for the **private payment method and amount**:

	Very True	Somewhat True	Somewhat Not True	Not True At All
The payment method provides support for quality improvement efforts and resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Payments are made reasonably on-time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The payment method is easy for parents/families to use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The payment method is able to support continuity of children's care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents are satisfied with the payment method.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paperwork and other administrative processes of the payment method are minimally disruptive to services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The payment method supports transportation costs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The amount provided is adequate to cover child's expenses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The amount provided is adequate to support children's full-time care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Scholarship Program Quality Grants

Now we want to ask you about how the quality grant funds were used at your program. The quality grant funds are the difference between the scholarship amount and the tuition amount. Your program received a total of \$INSERT AMOUNT in scholarship quality grant funds from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010.

4. Of the total \$INSERT AMOUNT scholarship quality grant funds your program received in this period, about what percentage was used for the following purposes: [your best estimate is fine] [4a-4h should add to 100% total].

4a. Ongoing operations (e.g., staff salaries, supplies, etc.) □□□%

4b. To purchase teaching materials to improve the learning environment:
Curriculum and assessment tools? □□□%

Books and toys? □□□%

Large equipment (e.g., playground equipment)? □□□%

4c. To pay for professional development (e.g., training workshops, consultation)? □□□%

4d. To provide more opportunities for family involvement and partnerships? □□□%

4e. To pay for building improvements? □□□%

4f. To pay tuition for other children who did not have scholarships? □□□%

4g. To increase teacher/staff pay (select all that apply)? □□□%

Substitute teachers □□□%

Increased salary/benefits

Additional staff/additional staff hours

4h. For other expenditures (please describe below) □□□%

1 0 0 %

General Impressions of the Scholarship Program

5. How has the Scholarship Program affected the children and families you serve?

- a. As a result of the Scholarship Program funds, are you...
1. Serving more children than you would have served without the scholarship? Yes No
 2. Serving children with different demographics than you had served without the scholarship? Yes No
(for example, children with different ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds)

b. Please provide two examples of how the scholarship program impacted your program's ability to serve children.

Example #1:

Example #2:

6. Which of the following ways did the Scholarship Program affect the quality or services your program provided to children and their families?

- In the first column, please mark *all* the ways the Scholarship Program has affected services.
- In the second column, mark the *primary* way the Scholarship Program has affected services.

	<i>All ways the scholarships affected services</i> (Mark ALL that apply)	<i>Primary way the scholarships affected services</i> (Mark <u>ONE</u>)
--	---	---

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Made it possible to enroll children from low-income households | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Supported quality improvements for my program | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Increased the number of hours that children could attend the program | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

d. Please provide two examples of how the scholarship program affected your program's quality or services.

Example #1:
Example #2:

7. Was the amount of the scholarship payment enough to cover the costs for the children who had scholarships? Yes No

If it was not enough, please explain how or why:

--

8. Is there anything else you would like us to know about the scholarship payment process?

--

9. Please describe the most important benefits of participating in the Scholarship Program for your program.

--

10. Please describe any challenges to participating in the Scholarship Program

--

11. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the Scholarship Program?

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

For more information about the MELF Scholarship Program go to www.melf.us.

If you have questions about this survey please contact Kate Ferguson at (650) 859-4428 or

MELF-evaluation@sri.com

Focus Group Protocol

Introduction

- Hi, my name is Erika Gaylor and I work for SRI International and we are interested in learning about the Scholarship Program.
- **Introduce the translator (if necessary).**
- SRI International is based in CA and is working with the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF) to organize these parent focus groups. MELF provides the money for the scholarship program.
- Thank you for participating in this group discussion. To show our appreciation for each of you taking time to talk with us today, we will be giving each of you a **\$20 gift certificate** to Target at the end of the session.
- I will be talking with you to learn what you like about the Scholarship Program (**other names that would be familiar to parents**) and ways in which you think the program could be better.
- What you tell us today will help the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation and the programs that work with you to help your child get ready for school.
- MELF wants to provide you with a good program.
- MELF wants to learn from parents. Your ideas can help them make sure that the programs you and other parents are getting are what you want.
- **Consent:** We will summarize the ideas discussed here to share with MELF. We will **never** include names or any identifying information about you or your families in those summaries. We would like to record the discussion so we do not miss any important points you make (**explain computer recording and person helping to take notes**). Your participation in this discussion is voluntary; you may leave at any time. Please let me know now if you are comfortable participating in this discussion and you are okay with us recording the discussion.
- “If you understand why we are here and are agreeing to be part of this discussion, please say yes (or nod your head).”
- This discussion will take about 45 minutes.
- I will ask some questions and we will take notes on your answers. I would like you to discuss your answer with each other – like it is a conversation. I will just be listening and asking questions. There are no right or wrong answers. We want to know what you think. Again, remember that MELF staff will not know who said what. They will only see a summary of the discussion. Do you have any questions for me before we get started?

Questions¹

1. Let's start off by introducing ourselves. Please tell us a little bit about you and your family including how many children you have and the name and age of your child (children) who are participating in the scholarship program.
2. How did you hear about the Scholarship Program? [PROBES, IF NECESSARY] Who (agency/person) referred you to the Scholarship program? Who helped you fill out the application?
3. Why did you choose to be a part of the Scholarship Program?
4. How many of you had a parent mentor/home visitor with the scholarship program?
 - 4a. If yes, tell us about what your parent mentor/home visitor did when she/he came to your house. What kinds of things does she/he talk to you about? What does s/he do?
 - a. Is your parent mentor someone that worked with your family for awhile or was this person new to your family?
 - b. What activities and/or services offered by the Parent Mentor were most helpful to you?
 - c. What information offered by the Parent Mentor was most helpful to you?
 - d. Are there topics, information, activities, or services that you still need?
 - e. Is there anything else that you would have liked your visitor/mentor to help you with?
 - 4b. If no, do you know why you didn't have a parent mentor?
5. Tell me how you chose which program to use the scholarship funds.
 - 5a. How long did it take you to find a program to use your scholarship? Was it easy or did it take a long time? Tell me why it took a long time.
 - 5b. How long has your child attended this program?
 - 5c. What do you like about this program?
 - 5d. If you did not have this scholarship for your child, where would your child have been cared for this past year?

¹ General Probes:

- Tell me more about that.
- Can you give me an example of that?
- Why is that important to you?
- What could be done to make it easier?

5e. Are there some things about the program that you think could be improved (made better)? What? [We are talking about this specific program – Jeanette’s program, New Horizons, or Central Lutheran]?

6. Do you currently receive government child care subsidies? You might know this as CCAP.

If you used to use a child care subsidy, can you tell us how you used it to pay for your child’s care? Why are you no longer using it?

7a. Have you heard of Parent Aware?

IF YES: Is Parent Aware helpful to you? How? Give me some examples.

IF NO: It is a new system in Minnesota that rates the quality of child care and preschool programs and provides information to parents about quality. Have you heard of it? Is it helpful to you? How? Give me some examples.

8. Most early childhood staff mainly speak English. Has this been a problem for you?

8a. IF YES: What do you think program staff should do about this problem? What ideas do you have?

9. Would you change anything about the Scholarship Program?

10. Is there anything that we have not talked about that you’d like to share with us about this program? [PROBE: IF YOU WERE GOING TO TELL YOUR LEGISLATORS ABOUT THE PROGRAM, WHAT WOULD YOU WANT THEM TO KNOW THAT WE HAVE NOT ALREADY TALKED ABOUT]