

SRI International

Evaluation of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program

Issue Brief 3: Summary of Implementation (Year 3)



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Introduction

The evaluation of the pilot of the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program includes both process and outcome components. This is the third issue brief; it covers the perspective of the implementation team on the accumulation of successes and challenges experienced from July 2007 to February 2010. As of February 2010, all children were enrolled in the scholarship program and thus most of the implementation start-up activities had been completed.

Previous briefs described how the scholarship model was implemented and what was learned about its effects on children, families, early care and education (ECE) programs, and the targeted community (districts 6 & 7 in Saint Paul, Minnesota) in the first and second years of the project (i.e., during a discrete period of time).

The purpose of this brief is to summarize the lessons learned from the perspectives of the implementation team members across the entire period of implementation of the scholarship model, after enrollment of all eligible children into early education programs had been complete.

SRI interviewed the implementation team in February 2010 in a focus group format, asking them to identify themes and lessons learned across the implementation of the scholarship program.

This brief begins with an overview of the scholarship model and the major evaluation questions, and then contains a section of findings based on (1) data collected at the end of enrollment and (2) lessons learned described by the implementation team in a focus group conducted at the end of enrollment. The findings describe the following:

- Summary of the numbers of participating children and ECE programs at the end of the enrollment period
- The implementation team's perceptions about lessons learned from the implementation of the pilot program

The remaining program evaluation activities for the final 2 years (2010 to 2012) involve tracking children as they participate in ECE programs and enter kindergarten and conducting child outcome assessments and parent phone interviews in the fall of 2010 and 2011. The summary describes the next steps in the evaluation reporting.

Below we describe the scholarship model to give context for understanding the implementation findings. We also describe changes to the original scholarship program model made in year 2.

The Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Model and Its Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to test the effectiveness of a market-oriented early childhood scholarship model outlined by Rolnick and Grunewald.¹ 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 ECE programs, particularly for children from low-income families (who often lack access to high-quality ECE programs).

¹ Rolnick, A., & Grunewald, R. (2003, December). Early childhood development: Economic development with a high public return. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, *The Region (Supplement)*, 17(4), 6-12.

Grunewald, R., & Rolnick, A. (2006). *A proposal for achieving high returns on early childhood development*. Minneapolis, MN: Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Available at <http://www.minneapolisfed.org/pubs/cd/07-4/melf.cfm>.

In 2008, the developers (Rolnick and Grunewald) and individuals representing MELF were asked about the impetus for the pilot of the scholarship program and their vision of the scholarship program addressing these early childhood 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 ECE program administrators want to make a living).
- In developing the scholarship model, the developers kept in mind three principles which guided the program and implementation:
 - **Provision of financial resources to families.** It is essential that parents from low-income families be given the financial resources that will allow them to access high-quality ECE programs for their children; if incentives to programs are increased, the market will respond.
 - **Increased accountability.** It is essential that ECE programs be held accountable to produce positive results (e.g., get 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.** It is essential that low-income parents be given information that can help them make good choices about how best to support their children's early learning and school readiness. If parents are given the information about the characteristics and benefits of high-quality ECE programs for their children's learning and school readiness and the monetary resources needed to access these programs, the empowerment will create demand, which in turn will promote long-term sustainability of the supply of high-quality ECE programs.

In short, the model contends that the market must provide incentives to ECE 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 up demand for high-quality ECE programs as well as promote sustainability. Additionally, several of the respondents stated that the model should be more cost effective at a systems level; that is, the market will support those programs that achieve positive results, but those programs that cannot do so, will not be sustained (or at the very least, will not participate in a market-driven approach, i.e., not solicit scholarship funds because they do not meet high quality standards).

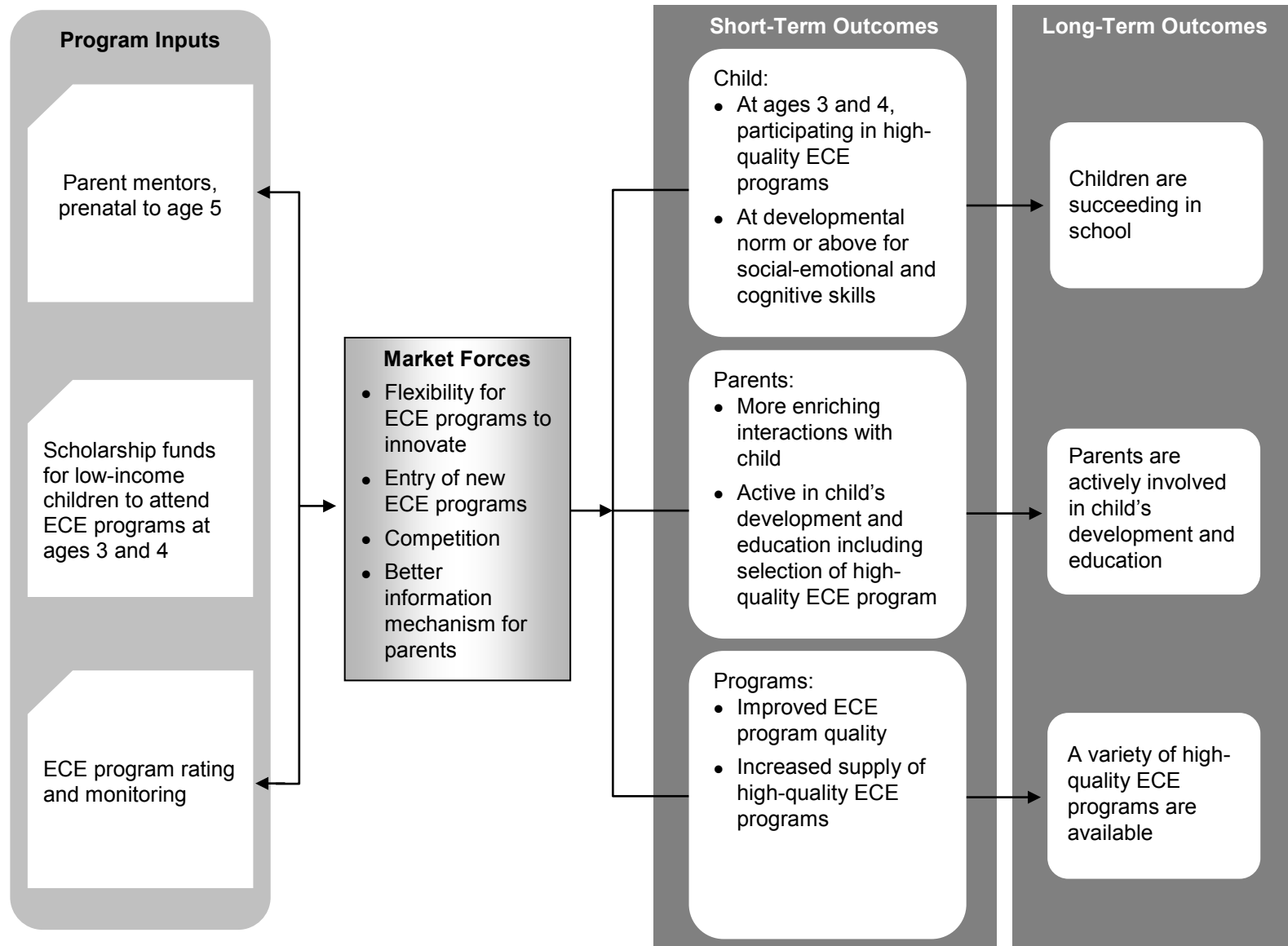
Figure 1 shows the logic model of the scholarship program from its developers. The model has three major interventions that map on to the three principles described above, shown as Program Inputs.

- **Parent mentoring** through home visiting to provide parents with information about the characteristics and benefits of high-quality ECE programs
 - Mentoring leads to parent empowerment—Low-income parents are given information that can help them make good choices about how best to support their children's early learning and school readiness.

- **Scholarships** for low-income families to use to pay for high-quality ECE programs for their preschool children
 - Scholarships lead to access to markets–Low-income families are given the financial resources to enable them to access high-quality ECE programs for their children.
 - If incentives to programs are increased, the market will respond (i.e., with increases in program supply and quality).
- Implementation of an ECE **program quality rating system**, Parent Aware,² to rate and monitor ECE program quality
 - A rating system leads to increased accountability–ECE programs are accountable for producing positive results (e.g., preparing children to be successful in school).

² For detailed information about Parent Aware, go to its website: <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



ECE = Early Childhood Education

How did the components of the scholarship program model change during implementation?

A number of changes in the originally proposed scholarship program model occurred during the first 2 years that the program was implemented. To understand the implementation overall, it is important to note that during 2009, MELF experienced a 36% reduction in funding due to difficulties in fundraising as a result of the larger economic context. In March 2009, the MELF board and staff made difficult decisions that altered the implementation of the Scholarship Program. The following changes were made as a result of the budget cuts:

- Parent mentoring services ended June 30, 2009. The decision was made to focus the limited amount of resources on the larger component of the Scholarship Program model, the enrollment of children in high-quality ECE programs. This change led to an increase in the role of Resources for Child Caring (RCC) and public health in recruiting and contacting families.
- Beginning in fall 2009, those ECE programs that do not charge parent fees (i.e., Head Start and Saint Paul Public Schools [SPPS]) no longer received the full amount of the scholarship funds, but were reimbursed a small amount for scholarship families who select these programs.
- The catchment area was expanded in summer 2009 to include the Payne/Phalen neighborhood (district 5) to increase the number of enrolled children with scholarships who began ECE program attendance in fall 2009.
- MELF and the implementation team needed to cap cohort 3³ enrollment in July 2009.

The findings to be presented below draw on the scholarship logic model to show how the scholarship model is working and what has been learned about its components. The data presented in this report address questions about the overall implementation of the scholarship program at the end of enrollment of children and their families.

Findings — Implementation Progress and Lessons Learned

This section describes findings related to the implementation team's perceptions about how implementation went overall, lessons learned about the scholarship program model at the end of enrollment of children and families, and whether the model has been implemented as intended. Specifically, we asked about implementation overall and the different components of the Scholarship Program including (1) recruitment and participation of families and their children, (2) outreach and participation of ECE programs, and (3) parent mentoring. This section summarizes findings from the focus group conducted with the implementation team in early February 2010. The information from this focus group focuses on activities and strategies that worked well in implementation and challenges that may need to be considered in future replications.

³ The original recruitment plan included cohort 1, a group of children enrolled in early 2008 ($n = 87$) as part of initial ramping up of the scholarship program (not intended to be enrolled into the evaluation), and then two cohorts of 3-year-olds, referred to as cohort 2 (began ECE programming in fall 2008) and cohort 3 (began ECE programming in fall 2009). Two infant cohorts (less than 1-year-olds [$n = 72$] and 1-year-olds [$n = 81$]) were also enrolled in 2008.

Methods and Respondents

SRI staff conducted the focus group via conference call on February 2, 2010 with 10 of the individuals who had significant roles in the development and implementation of the scholarship program, including key staff from MELF, the city of Saint Paul mayor's office, and Resources for Child Caring (RCC) that administered the Scholarship Program. See Appendix B for a list of the attendees.⁴

The focus group questions were designed to gather information about how the model was implemented and effects on children, families, early care and education (ECE) programs, and the targeted community (districts 6 and 7 in Saint Paul, Minnesota). The focus group was recorded digitally and notes were taken during the interviews. Appendix C includes the focus group protocol used. This format is advantageous for collecting general impressions and overall lessons learned and that is the focus of this report. For more detailed responses by individuals, see implementation briefs for years 1 and 2.⁵

SRI staff supplemented the notes taken during the interviews with additional notes taken while listening to the recordings at a later date. All available notes were then coded by two team members to identify themes and issues associated with each question. The two team members then met and collated and discussed the themes, and generated potential lessons learned and recommendations.

The focus group attendees were asked the following questions:

- Overall, how would you say implementation has gone?
- How do you think the recruitment and outreach to families went?
- How do you think outreach to and participation of ECE programs went?
- Describe the successes and challenges of the implementation procedures (e.g., payment structure, application form).
- How do you think the parent mentoring component of the model has gone?

Overall, how would you say implementation has gone?

There were many successes associated with the Scholarship Program and these are highlighted below in specific sections. The respondents in the focus group also highlighted key challenges that deserve attention and provide some overarching considerations in developing a scholarship program in other communities.

- **Fundraising in an uncertain economic climate.** As the reduction in budget in Year 2 demonstrated, MELF's ability to raise funds at the originally projected levels was significantly impaired due to the drastically changed economic climate of the past 2 years. This change forced a number of modifications in the scholarship program model,

⁴ The focus group was missing representation from individuals who worked on the parent mentoring component of the model. Unfortunately, neither Saint Paul - Ramsey County Public Health nor individual parent mentors' perspectives are included in this report. The supervisors were unable to attend the focus group and were unavailable to be interviewed at a later date. However, information about parent mentoring can be found in both the Year 1 and Year 2 Implementation Briefs as well as the Annual Reports.

⁵ The responses presented here are not exhaustive of the successes and challenges that the team faced in implementing the scholarship program. See implementation briefs for years 1 and 2 which are available on the MELF website (<http://melf.us/>).

made fundraising more difficult, and forced hard choices about who would receive a scholarship before the program stopped enrollment in December 2009. In addition to the downturn in the overall economy in the past 2 years affecting the fundraising of the scholarship program, this economic context also impacted ECE programs. For example, RCC reported that ECE programs in the pilot area experienced an approximate 10% decline in enrollment during the last 2 years. This decline in enrollment may have impacted programs' incentive to enroll children with scholarship funds and may have changed the number and types of families served.

- **Challenges associated with what is meant by market-driven in the scholarship program model.** Respondents described difficulties in knowing precisely what kinds of activities they were allowed to undertake that were consistent with the intent of the market-driven model. That is, how “hands-on” were the ECE program staff allowed to be with regard to outreach activities, the application process with families, assisting families in selection of an ECE program, etc.? Over the first year of the project, the implementation team worked on defining what activities were allowed, and this evolving context sometimes created confusion for programs, RCC staff, and families about the procedures for enrolling in the scholarship program and selecting an ECE program. Other challenges were the result of not having clarity about how the market-driven model was intended to work for publicly funded early childhood programs (i.e., programs in which parents do not pay fees).
- **Timing of implementing the different program components.** The implementation team wondered whether or not the program components could have been phased in differently. Perhaps the Parent Aware (PA) rating system should have been established prior to awarding scholarships (i.e., about one year before awarding scholarships). This may have led to an increase in the number of eligible ECE programs rated and available for families to choose for their children.

Lessons Learned

Some of the lessons learned about overall implementation included the following:

- Obtain adequate funding prior to implementation. As intended by the developers, an ideal funding situation would be an endowment or pooled funding stream that met the diverse and changing needs of families in accessing high-quality ECE for all of their children.
- Be clear from the beginning of implementation what kinds of outreach, enrollment, and ECE program selection procedures and activities are consistent with a market-driven model. Such clarity gives program staff and families a clear understanding about who is eligible and how ECE program and other implementation staff are expected to assist families.
- Provide a sufficient period of time for a planning phase to establish policies and procedures, and to communicate the goals, vision, policies, and procedures of the program and the model. In the planning period, clarify roles and responsibilities for all agencies and organizations involved, and provide mechanisms for receiving questions and disseminating answers about roles and responsibilities.
- Consider establishing the quality rating system for the ECE programs prior to implementing the awarding of scholarship funds (perhaps from 1 to 2 years earlier). Such

a phased in start-up would allow time for the rating system to become well implemented and also to ensure an adequate supply of high-quality ECE programs for parents to choose from in the community.

How do you think the recruitment and outreach to families has gone?⁶

The Scholarship Program ended enrollment in December 2009. Between January 2008 and December 2009, over 650 children and their families participated in the Scholarship Program by receiving parent mentoring and/or a scholarship to attend a high-quality program.⁷ Given the reduction in the overall budget in year 2 and the uncertain economic climate, the ability of the scholarship program to reach a large number of families and provide essential services that support school readiness was seen as a great success by the focus group respondents. At the end of enrollment, the implementation team felt positive about reaching the intended children and families who would benefit most from the scholarship program model. In particular, the team described connecting families who were socially isolated (e.g., new immigrant families) to a wide variety of services that included a high-quality ECE program. The respondents felt that many families needed help in navigating the system and benefited greatly from the guidance provided to them about selecting and accessing a high-quality ECE program.

The Scholarship Program implementation team and staff worked hard to implement effective strategies for conducting outreach to families, explaining the program requirements to families, and ultimately getting families connected to high-quality ECE programs. Of the 652 children and their families that participated in the scholarship program, 344 attended a high-quality ECE program between January 2008 and December 2009.⁸ The data below describe the number of consented children participating in Cohorts 2 and 3 at the end of 2009 ($N = 256$) and the types of programs they were attending.

- Of the 256 children whose parents had consented to participate in the evaluation and were ever enrolled in an ECE program using their scholarship funds, one-third of the children (30%) were using their scholarship funds to attend a Head Start program, and over half (58%) were using their scholarship funds to attend a center-based ECE program. A small percentage of children (8%) were using their scholarship funds at a licensed family child care program, and 3% of the children attended a public school-based program.
- About three-fourths (77%) of the children were using their scholarship funds to attend an ECE program full-time.
- Prior to receiving a scholarship, the majority of children (56%) were being cared for either in the child's home or in unlicensed family child care.

These percentages reflect the hard work of the implementation team to connect many children and their families to high-quality ECE programs. Over half of the families reported that their children had received care either in the child's home or in unlicensed settings before enrolling in the Scholarship Program and accessing ECE programs rated as high quality in the Parent Aware rating system.

⁶ The implementation team originally planned to enroll about 1000 children into the scholarship in the pilot community, based on available census data about the low-income population in the pilot community.

⁷ Of the 652 children, 522 consented to participate in the evaluation and 256 of these consented children were included in the outcome evaluation and are currently being assessed and tracked.

⁸ This information is also reported in the Year 2 Annual Report.

Lessons Learned

Lessons learned about effective outreach strategies included the following:

- Adopt policies that leverage existing resources and accommodate different outreach needs (e.g., translating the materials, finding trusted individuals in the community who could recruit and explaining the scholarship program to eligible families). Outreach strategies that will be most effective capitalize on involving individuals and organizations that already have the trust of eligible families in the community.
- Adopt policies and procedures that were found to be related to effective screening and eligibility including the following:
 - Focus on a small number of eligibility criteria. By developing simple and clear eligibility criteria⁹, the implementers will be able to clearly communicate eligibility and serve many children and families who are at-risk and eligible.
 - Streamline the application process by tapping into existing databases to verify eligibility.
 - Communicate clearly and disseminate widely the eligibility criteria and program requirements.
 - Consider implementing a prescreening process for determining eligibility so that key staff can subsequently spend face-to-face time with families providing useful information, identifying high-quality ECE programs that match families' needs, and enrolling children in a timely manner.¹⁰ A prescreening process might involve using existing databases to verify eligibility or it might involve hiring temporary case workers that could quickly determine eligibility over the phone.

How do you think outreach to and participation of ECE programs has gone?

Data showing families' selection of ECE programs over time and ECE programs' participation in Parent Aware provide a window into the market forces that were operating in the scholarship model pilot area.¹¹

- At baseline in 2008, 221 programs were licensed to provide care in and near the pilot areas. Licensure was used as an estimate of available programs that could decide to participate in Parent Aware and subsequently enroll children with scholarship funds.
- Approximately 10% to 13% of these licensed ECE programs in and near the pilot areas were participating in Parent Aware during the first two years of implementation.
- By the end of enrollment (December 2009), the 256 children in cohorts 2 and 3 had enrolled in 47 programs that were rated as high quality in Parent Aware.

⁹ Eligibility criteria for the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program included child's age, geographic location, and income.

¹⁰ Note that the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program did not pre-screen applicants but the implementation team would recommend considering this step in any replication efforts to minimize the time spent processing applications and maximize the time spent on mentoring and enrollment activities.

¹¹ This information is also reported in the Year 2 Annual Report.

Overall, the respondents felt that outreach to and participation of ECE programs went well because families were able to select high-quality programs for their children. One challenge identified was working in a number of different ECE systems, including Head Start, publicly funded PreK in the Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS), for-profit and non-profit center-based programs, family child care programs (FCC), and more informal child care settings (i.e., family, friend, and neighbor arrangements). Although the informal child care settings could not participate in Parent Aware unless licensed, many families selected this type of care for their children prior to enrolling in the Scholarship Program (as shown above) or used it in combination with the ECE program that was paid for by the scholarship funds. These different programs had different supports available to them to participate in the Parent Aware rating system, and ultimately had differential access to children with scholarship funds.

The team was well aware of these challenges, and identified several issues that need to be considered in outreach and participation of different types of ECE programs, including the following:

- One of the biggest challenges was determining how to include ECE programs in which parents do not pay fees (i.e., Head Start, SPPS PreK). Programs in which parents do not pay fees received scholarships during the first year of the scholarship pilot. The policy changed after the first full year of implementation and beginning in the fall of 2009, these programs only received a stipend for helping to track children's attendance and for participating in the evaluation. The implementation team recognized that working with these programs within the market-driven scholarship model was a challenge.
- One criterion of eligibility (i.e., child's age) was tied to the child's age at the beginning of September of each year, which in turn became the time at which most children could begin enrolling in an ECE program using their scholarship funds. This procedure may have unintentionally created a barrier for some programs that typically enroll children and fill slots in the spring of each year. Although families could have identified these slots, some programs need to fill slots when available and could not have waited until a child reached eligibility and their scholarship funding began in September.
- When families wanted multiple child care arrangements, it was difficult to coordinate care and payments across more than one program.
- Some respondents questioned whether the amount of the scholarships was appropriate (adequate) to incentivize some programs to participate in Parent Aware and enroll children with scholarships into their programs. The developers used CCAP as a proxy for the market rate and then priced the scholarship amount at 30% more than the market rate. Data are not available to evaluate whether this amount was too low and prevented some programs from participating. Anecdotal evidence suggests this may have affected participation rates of only a small number of programs.

Lessons Learned

Some of the lessons learned about recruiting ECE programs included the following:

- Consider how the market-driven scholarship model will be implemented by ECE programs in which parents do not pay fees. One possible approach is to encourage these programs to develop a plan to increase slots and then allow them to enroll children with scholarship funds if they cannot provide programming with existing funds.

- Consider the existing policies and procedures of different types of ECE programs (e.g., Head Start, publicly funded PreK in schools, for-profit and non-profit center-based programs, licensed family child care programs) in terms of eligibility requirements, recruitment and schedule for enrollment of children into the program (e.g., year-round, fall versus spring enrollment periods, part-time versus full-time programming), and funding sources (e.g., parent fees, grants) when developing scholarship program requirements, policies, and procedures.
- Develop clear policies and procedures to accommodate families who want to use multiple programs for their child's care and education. Policies and procedures should address coordination related to variations in eligibility requirements, payments, transportation, and programs' schedules.

How do you think the parent mentoring component of the model has gone?

Overall, the team described the important role parent mentors had in the lives of the children and families participating in the scholarship program. In particular, the team felt that families viewed their parent mentors as advocates and home visitors. The team also noted that some families did not see their parent mentors' role as someone who was helping them to select a high-quality ECE program. The implementation team made several suggestions about how to improve the parent mentoring component of the scholarship program model. There was a consensus that unclear guidelines about the role and responsibilities of parent mentors in implementing the scholarship program created some of the challenges that occurred. These challenges are described below:

- Parent mentors were asked to add the additional work as a resource and referral specialist to their home visiting activities.¹² In the scholarship program model, the parent mentors were identified as the conduits between the scholarship program and access to knowledge and selecting a high-quality ECE program.¹³ In practice, implementation team staff noted that how parent mentoring was delivered, what information was shared, how decisionmaking by parents occurred, and what additional services were provided to parents varied considerably by agency, by parent mentor, and over time.
- Information about the program policies and procedures for mentoring were often communicated to the supervisors, who were then responsible for communicating policies (or changes to policies) to their respective parent mentors. Respondents commented that this may not have been the most efficient or effective way to communicate with the parent mentors.

Lessons Learned

Some of the lessons learned about the parent mentoring component included the following two different options for providing the parent mentoring in future replications, either:

- Use resource and referral staff as the primary resource to assist parents in selecting high-quality ECE programs. However, supplement this resource with parent mentors through

¹² The scholarship program implementation manual describes the parent mentoring component in general terms, but does not prescribe specific activities that parent mentors must or can do with families.

¹³ It is worth noting that the scholarship model, as originally described, saw the parent mentors starting work with families when the children were infants, not around age 3, which is what happened in this project in order to enroll a sufficient sample into the evaluation to study kindergarten outcomes before the end of 2011, the sunset of the MELF.

home visits to maintain the family support services. Parent mentors would be better equipped to focus their efforts on families that are having difficulty with enrollment and/or absenteeism at an ECE program.

- Increase the type and amount of training and support to parent mentors from home visiting agencies to improve their ability to help parents select high-quality ECE programs and get their children enrolled in programs.

Summary and Next Steps

Many of the lessons learned in the first 2 years of implementation were still relevant in Year 3. The lessons overall advocate for adequate **planning and funding** prior to implementation, ensuring clear **communication and wide dissemination** of policies and procedures, consideration of the **diversity** of families, ECE programs, and systems that may be participating in the scholarship program, and **leverage existing resources** in the community (e.g., resource and referral, home visiting services, trusted individuals who can help with recruitment). The information in this brief summarizes the findings at the end of enrollment of children and families into the scholarship program. The evaluation team will produce the following additional reports through December 2011:

- Cost Study Report (due December 31, 2010) and PowerPoint presentation summary of findings via WebEx (due January 14, 2011). The report and presentation will include (1) findings from the cost study conducted by RAND which include data on the per-child costs and the sources and amounts of funds used to pay for child's care in a subset of ECE programs with scholarship children in attendance during the 2009-2010 fiscal year and (2) findings from a survey given to all ECE programs with scholarship children in attendance during the 2009-2010 fiscal year which includes questions about how the scholarship funds were used to improve quality and program directors' general impressions of the scholarship funds' impact on program operations.
- Scholarship Program Annual Report 2011 (due March 15, 2011) summarizing data collected through fall 2010¹⁴
- Implementation Brief 4 (due September 15, 2011) describing implementation findings between June 2010 and July 2011¹⁵
- 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 results from the final evaluation report, including all outcome data through kindergarten entry for the entire sample of children with scholarships

¹⁴ A one- to two-page fact sheet based on findings from this brief will also be prepared.

¹⁵ A one- to two-page fact sheet based on findings from this brief will also be prepared.

Appendix A

Scholarship Program Model Implementation Manual

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.

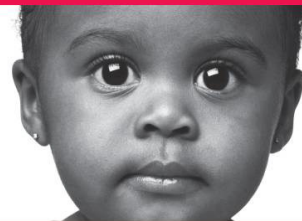
Scholarship Program: refers to the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program Pilot project or administration.

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



Resources for Child Caring

Raising the standard of care for children



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Appendix B

List of Focus Group Attendees (February 2, 2010)

Developers

1. Rob Grunewald – Associate Economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis
2. Ericca Maas – Community Affairs Senior Project Manager at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

MELF staff and leadership

3. Duane Benson – Executive Director at MELF
4. Denise Garcia – Director of Administration at MELF
5. Laurie Davis – Policy Director at MELF

Scholarship Program Implementation Team (Implementers)

6. Lisa Cariveau – former Early Childhood Project Coordinator at Saint Paul Mayor Coleman's Office
7. Sandy Myers – Director of Programs at RCC
8. Patti Kester – Scholarship Administrator at RCC
9. Carolyn Veaser-Egbide – Program Manager at RCC
10. Vallay Varro – Education Policy Director for the Mayor's Office

Appendix C

Focus Group Protocol (2010)

1. If you were telling someone else what worked well and what didn't work well, what would you tell them? Please describe the challenges and successes around the following components of the Scholarship Program. Give specific examples for each challenge and/or success.
 - a. Eligibility (children/families, pilot area, ECE programs)
 - b. Model Components (Parent Aware, Parent Mentoring, Scholarships to ECE programs)
 - c. Informing/recruiting families
 - d. Informing/recruiting programs
 - e. Informing/recruiting communities
 - f. Tracking (i.e., process of following families as they make their ECE program selections (initially) and then as children move in and out of ECE programs for short or long periods of time and tracking their participation in that way)
 - g. Implementation Procedures (e.g., payment structure, application form)
 - h. Communication of procedures
2. For things that didn't work so well, think about how you would change or modify those activities, procedures, or policies? Specifically, what would you do to eliminate the challenge?
3. What do you think are going to be the surprises when the results come out?