

Senators Wiger, Hottinger and Pappas introduced--
S.F. No. 380: Referred to the Committee on Education.

1 A bill for an act
2 relating to early childhood education; establishing an
3 advisory school readiness board to make
4 recommendations to the governor and the legislature on
5 developing a coordinated, efficient, and
6 cost-effective system for delivering early childhood
7 programs throughout the state; proposing coding for
8 new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 119B.

9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

10 Section 1. [119B.023] [STATE ADVISORY BOARD ON SCHOOL
11 READINESS.]

12 Subdivision 1. [ESTABLISHMENT.] An 11-member State
13 Advisory Board on School Readiness is established in the Office
14 of the Governor to advise the governor and the legislature on
15 developing a coordinated, efficient, and cost-effective system
16 for delivering throughout Minnesota early childhood programs
17 that focus on early care and education, health care, and family
18 support.

19 Subd. 2. [BOARD MEMBERS; TERMS.] (a) The advisory board
20 includes the following 11 members:

21 (1) the commissioner of employment and economic development
22 or the commissioner's designee;

23 (2) the commissioner of health or the commissioner's
24 designee;

25 (3) the commissioner of education or the commissioner's
26 designee;

27 (4) five public members appointed by the governor who are

1 recognized experts in early care and education; and

2 (5) three public members appointed by the governor who are
3 community or business leaders.

4 (b) Members appointed by the governor serve staggered
5 three-year terms. Board members must nominate and elect a
6 chairperson and other officers from among the public members.
7 Members initially appointed to the board shall assign themselves
8 by lot to terms of one, two, or three years. The chairperson
9 must notify the governor on the assignment of these terms. The
10 board shall meet regularly at the times and places the board
11 determines. Meetings shall be called by the chair or at the
12 written request of any three members. Members' terms,
13 compensation, removal, and vacancies are governed by section
14 15.0575.

15 Subd. 3. [DUTIES.] (a) The board shall recommend to the
16 governor and the legislature:

17 (1) the most effective method to improve the coordination
18 and delivery of early care and education services that
19 integrates child care, preschools, and family support services
20 and programs;

21 (2) a multiyear plan for effectively and efficiently
22 coordinating and integrating state services for early care and
23 education, improving service delivery and standards of care,
24 avoiding duplication and fragmentation of service, and enhancing
25 public and private investment;

26 (3) methods for measuring the quality, quantity, and
27 effectiveness of early care and education programs throughout
28 the state;

29 (4) how to identify and measure school readiness indicators
30 on a regular basis;

31 (5) how to track, enhance, integrate, and coordinate
32 federal, state, and local funds allocated for early care and
33 education and related family support services;

34 (6) policy changes to improve children's ability to start
35 school ready to learn;

36 (7) how to provide technical assistance to community

1 efforts that promote school readiness and encourage community
2 organizations to collaborate in promoting school readiness.

3 (b) The board shall convene separate policy work groups to
4 make recommendations to the governor and the legislature on:

5 (1) financing early childhood programs;

6 (2) building a coordinated service delivery system based on
7 an assessment of early childhood systems and available state and
8 federal funding;

9 (3) integrating a coordinated, collaborative health care
10 component, including medical homes, parent education, family
11 support, behavioral health and early education, into early
12 childhood programs and avoiding duplication of services;

13 (4) enhancing the quality and measuring the cost of child
14 care and preschool programs; and

15 (5) improving the wages, benefits, and supply of early
16 childhood professionals.

17 Subd. 4. [BOARD EXPIRATION.] The State Advisory Board on
18 School Readiness expires January 1, 2013.

19 [EFFECTIVE DATE.] This section is effective the day
20 following final enactment.

1 Senator moves to amend S.F. No. 380 as follows:

2 Page 1, line 12, delete "An 11-member" and insert "A
3 12-member"

4 Page 1, line 20, delete "11" and insert "12"

5 Page 1, line 27, after "(4)" insert "the commissioner of
6 human services or the commissioner's designee;

7 (5)"

8 Page 2, line 2, delete "(5)" and insert "(6)"

**Senate Counsel, Research,
and Fiscal Analysis**


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S.F. No. 380 - School Readiness State Advisory Board

Author: Senator Charles Wiger

Prepared by: Joan White, Senate Counsel (651/296-3814) 

Date: February 25, 2005

S.F. No. 380 establishes a state advisory board on school readiness.

Subdivision 1 establishes an 11-member state advisory board on school readiness in the office of the Governor in order to advise the Governor and Legislature on developing a coordinated, efficient, and cost effective system for delivering early childhood programs that focus on early care and education, health care, and family support.

Subdivision 2 provides the board membership. The board consists of the Commissioners of Employment and Economic Development, Health, Education, five public members appointed by the Governor who are recognized experts in early care and education, and three public members appointed by the Governor who are community or business leaders.

Members who are appointed to the board by the Governor serve staggered three-year terms. Board members must nominate and elect a chairperson and other officers. The board must meet regularly at the times and places the board determines. Meetings are called by the chair or at the written request of any three members. The members' terms, compensation, removal, and vacancies are governed by Minnesota Statutes, section 15.0575.

Subdivision 3 lists the duties of the board, which consists of making recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on the issues listed in paragraph (a).

Further, the board is required to convene separate work groups to make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on issues listed under paragraph (b).

Subdivision 4 provides the expiration date of the board, which is January 1, 2013.

This bill is effective the day following final enactment.

JW:rdr

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENT PARTICIPATION

GUIDING PRINCIPLES for MEANINGFUL PARENTAL SUPPORT/INVOLVEMENT

The following inclusive practices will allow a standard for parents to participate in systems change efforts in the state of Minnesota

- ***Parents*** invited to participate will have a clear understanding of their defined roles and responsibilities.
- ***Parents*** will understand the process put in place by the agency or group for parent recruitment, selection and orientation.
- ***Parents*** interests and experiences should align themselves with the goals and missions of the agency or group. A mutual understanding of the perspective a parent brings to the table will be established.
- ***Parents*** will have a clear expectation of their responsibility for reporting to and bringing back information from the communities they represent.
- ***Parents*** will have structured opportunities to communicate and network with other parents within the agency and group.
- ***Parents*** will know what supports will be available to allow them to participate, i.e., reimbursement or services child care, transportation, mileage/travel, parking, meals, lodging, honorarium, per-diem.
- ***Parents*** will understand the terms of their commitment, including length of term, dates and times of meetings, sub-committees exceptions.
- ***Parents*** will understand their responsibility for canceling child care, transportation or any other arrangements in a timely order.
- ***Parents*** should not incur any out of pocket expenses to serve on the team.
- ***Parents*** schedules should be carefully considered when meetings are scheduled.

Principles of Family Support Practice

- Staff and families work together in relationships based on equality and respect.
- Staff enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members—adults, youth and children.
- Families are resources to their own members, to other families to programs and to communities.
- Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society.
- Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process.
- Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.
- Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development.
- Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.
- Principles of family support are modeled in all program activities, including planning governance and administration.

*From: Guidelines for Family Support Practice (1996) (Chicago: Family Resource Coalition). To obtain a copy, contact Family Support America, 20 N Wacker Drive, Suite 1100, Chicago, IL 60606
Phone: 312-338-0900 Fax: 312-338-1522 www.familysupportamerican.org*

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENT PARTICIPATION

WHY PARENT INVOLVEMENT?

Questions for systems/organizations inviting parents to participate:

Why have you determined parents should be involved with your work?

Internal assessment questions:

- *Does your funding depend on it?*
- *Are you mandated to have parent involvement?*
- *Do you want to move towards a more inclusive process of shared decision making?*
- *Do you understand “*Family Support Principles”?*
- *Do you have resources or flexibility to incorporate strategies to engage parents in meaningful ways?*

What is the composition of your group and what perspective do you expect parents to bring?

Internal assessment questions:

- *Who is the parent representing, i.e., a geographic area, economic status, ethnic culture, self, a program, disability, gender?*
- *How many parents can your group recruit and sustain?*

What expectations do you have for parent representatives to exchange information with their constituents or community?

Internal assessment questions:

- *Have you recognized ways you can enhance parent’s leadership skills by providing opportunities to exchange information with different groups?*
- *Have you provided a role and responsibility in-service with the parent?*
- *Have you matched the parent with a mentor from the organization?*
- *Have you created ways parents can meet other parents involved?*

**Family Support-Intentional incorporation of family empowerment in all aspects of a programming as a way to enhance child development. Strategies can emerge from principles developed to differentiate family support programs from other services for families (see back).*



Hopes & Dreams, Challenges & Strengths

Minnesota Parents Talk About What Their Families Value

Sponsored by

Minnesota Parenting Association,
Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children,
the Cultural Beginnings project
of the Minnesota Child Care Resource & Referral Network
and Child Care WORKS

Funded by

Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning

Conducted

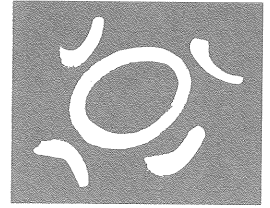
with 100 diverse parent participants
in May, June, and August 1998
in Bemidji, Duluth, Minneapolis (3), St. Paul, Winona, and Worthington

Facilitated and Summarized by

Karen Kurz-Riemer

*in memory of Jill Suapinski,
who participated in the Duluth Parent Roundtable*

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What do Minnesota parents want for their children?

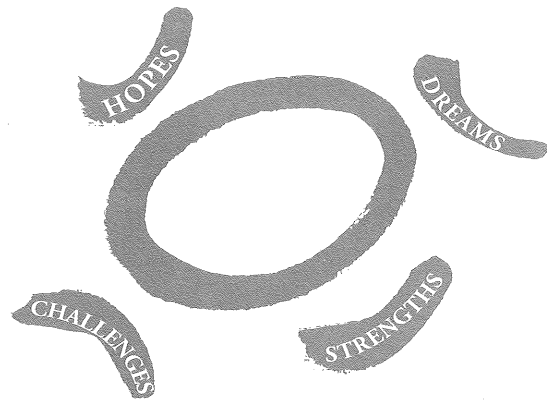
What do their children need to attain this ideal?

What gets in the way of children growing up to be productive and healthy adults?

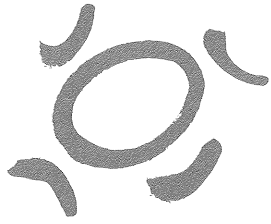
What strengths do Minnesota families and communities bring to raising children?

What would help parents accomplish what they want for their children and families?

Answering these questions was the focus of a series of eight roundtable discussions with Minnesota parents in Bemidji, Duluth, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Winona, and Worthington in May, June, and August of 1998.

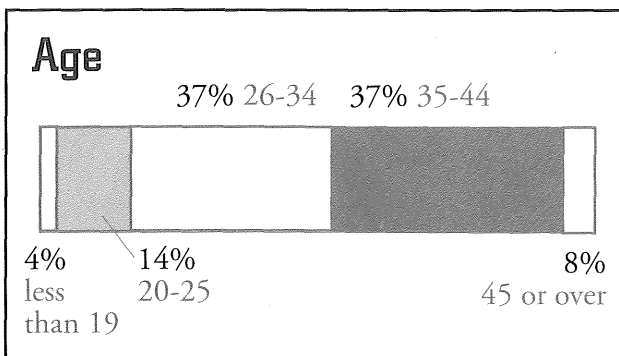
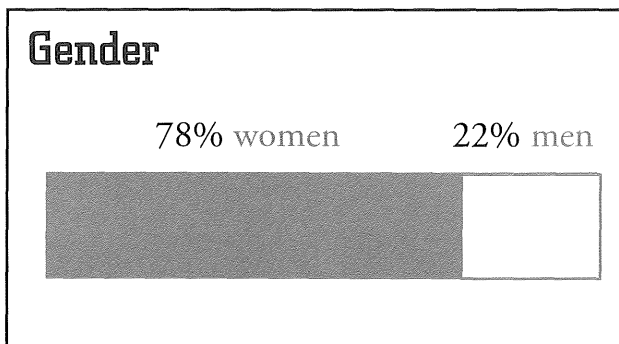


Participant Demographics

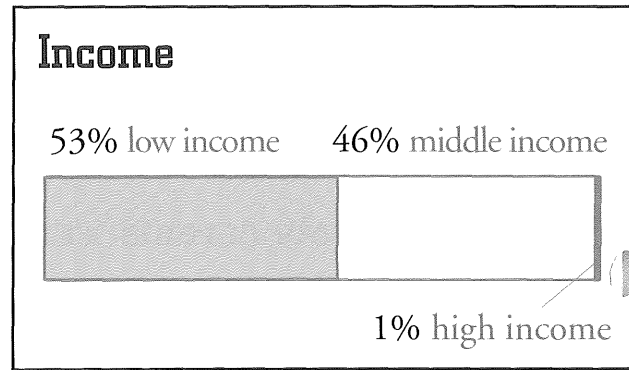


One hundred (100) parents participated from across the state. The number of participants at each of the eight roundtables ranged from seven to 17, with an average of 12 parents attending each session.

Seventy-eight (78) percent of the participants were women, and 22 percent men.

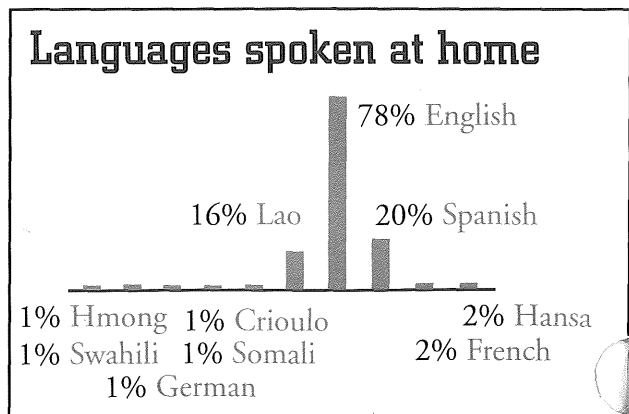
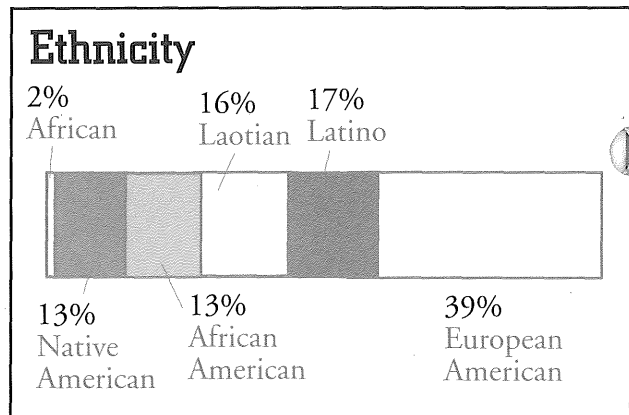


Most of the participants were between 26 and 44 years of age (37 percent age 26-34 and 37 percent age 35-44), with 14 percent age 20-25, eight percent 45 or older, and four percent less than 19 years of age.



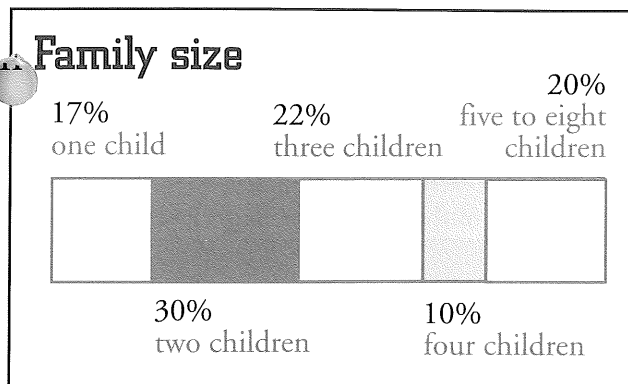
Approximately 53 percent of the parents identified themselves as low income, 46 percent as middle income, and one percent as high income.

Thirty-nine (39) percent of the parents were European American, 17 percent Latino, 16 percent Laotian, 13 percent Native American, 13 percent African American, and two percent African.



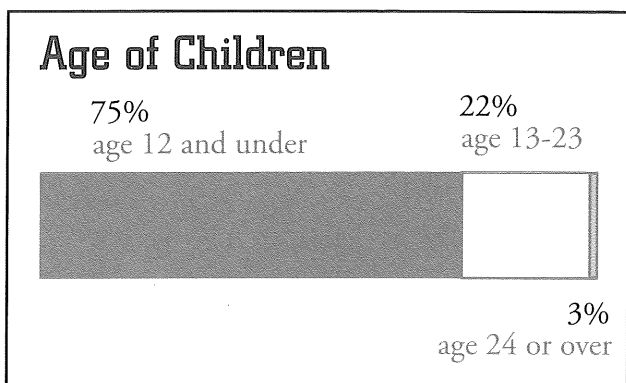
Languages spoken in the homes of participants included English (78 percent), Spanish (20 percent), Lao (16 percent), Hansa and French at two percent, and Hmong, Swahili, German, Somali, and Crioulo at one percent each.

Facilitator Comments



Most of the families had from one to four children, with 30 percent two children, 22 percent three children, 17 percent one child, and 10 percent four children. The remaining 20 percent of the families had from five to eight children.

Seventy-five (75) percent of the participants' children were age 12 or under, with 22 percent from age 13-23, and three percent 24 years of age or older.

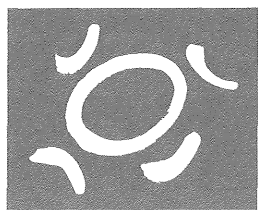


It was a pleasure and a privilege to facilitate these roundtable discussions with such a diverse group of parents. Uniformly, parents were passionate on the topic of their children and families. Occasional tears, frequent belly laughs, and sympathetic and empathic comments among parents were common at all of the roundtables.

Parents were generous with their time and participation, particularly when an interpreter was required for my facilitation, and very forthcoming with their opinions. They were intense about wanting the results of these roundtables spread to a wide audience with the potential to improve the way that institutions, government, employers, and communities work for their children and families.

There were remarkable similarities and commonalities in what these Minnesota parents wanted for their children and what they thought children needed to become productive adults. All parents faced formidable challenges in accomplishing what they wanted for their families. Their common issues were magnified by economic stress, racism, and cultural and language differences. Yet all families brought a variety of strengths to their children and communities and were clear about what they needed in return.

Summary of Responses to Roundtable Questions:



What kind of an adult do you want your children to become?

Most frequently mentioned by parents were their hopes that their children would succeed in school, be well educated, and be able to be self-sufficient in a profession that they enjoy. Although they wanted their children to be financially secure, several stated this did not necessarily mean wealthy. A few specified that they hoped their children would become doctors or lawyers or other important people and serve their family, neighborhood, community, and country.

One parent said she wanted her children to feel they deserve to achieve and succeed in life. Several wanted their children to have goals and pursue their dreams — to be hopeful and optimistic. As one parent stated, she wanted her children to be passionate about what they want and who they love. Another parent said she wanted her children to grasp and quest for knowledge, yet be intuitive about what was best for them.

It was important to parents that their children do the best they can at what they do, work hard, and be diligent and responsible. They wanted their children to learn from others and from their own mistakes and to persevere — that when they fall down, they get up again. They hoped that their children would learn to make good decisions and choices and take control of their own destinies.

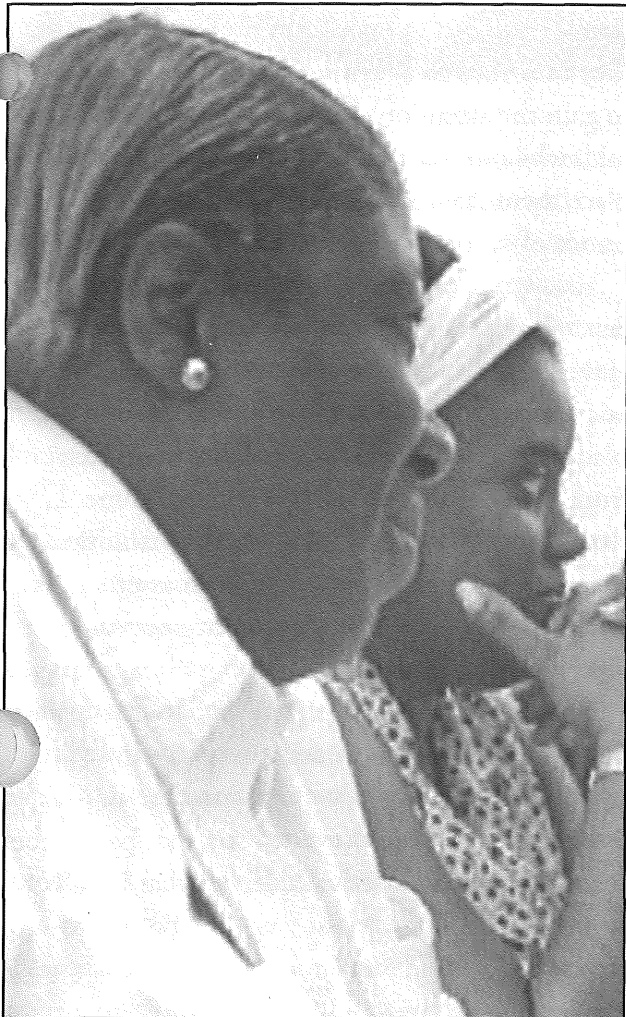


Parents felt it was very important that their children have a good sense of their origin and culture and the native language of their family. As one parent stated, to know where you're going, you have to know where you've been. Another commented that they want their children to realize that the world is not America, but that America is in the world. Parents wanted their children to be members of a community and to be compassionate, considerate, and socially responsible. They hoped their children would be tolerant

and accepting of others and realize that there is little in the world that is absolutely good or bad.

Several parents said they hoped their children would have a sense of their spirituality, with good ethics and moral values and a religion to believe in. They hoped for children who would be strong-minded, true to themselves, and lead more than follow. One father said he hoped that his children would be perfectly in the world, while not of the world.

A common theme from parents was the hope that their children would learn self-respect and self-esteem. A few stated that without self-respect, children would not be able to truly respect others. Even more parents talked about the hope that their children would respect others, especially their elders, and be able to form good relation-



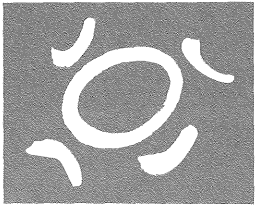
"I would like for my children to know who they are and from where they have come."

ships with other people. They wanted their children to be polite and non-violent and to learn ways to channel their energy and aggression. (One parent stated she did NOT want to see her child as an inmate on death row.)

Mothers and fathers hoped that their children would be content and happy, finding peace of mind in simple things. They hoped their children would be well-rounded and find a sense of balance among the needs and wants of self and others. Honesty and a sense of humor were other desirable qualities mentioned. Parents wished their children to be confident and competent, have common sense, and be able to deal with the unexpected. They wanted children to be drug-free, healthy, and safe, now and as adults — "to have clean underwear and food in their belly."

It is clear that all roundtable participants want the best for their children. One parent stated she wants her children to be free, conscious, and fully human. Another mother said that she wants everything for her children — "the best, with no sadness." She added, "It's painful to be a parent."

Summary of Responses to Roundtable Questions:



What do your children need to become this kind of an adult?

Overwhelmingly, parents responded that what children most needed to become this ideal human adult were parent role models who lived the values and beliefs they wanted their children to learn. Children also need other role models and mentors who may be extended family or other community members. One parent pointed out that positive adult role models from within and outside the family can go a long way toward countering the sometimes negative effects of peer groups and our media culture. Several parents brought up the saying “It takes a village to raise a child.”

One parent mentioned the less common expression “What you’re doing speaks so loudly, I can’t hear what you’re saying.” As role models, it’s important for parents to think positively, be

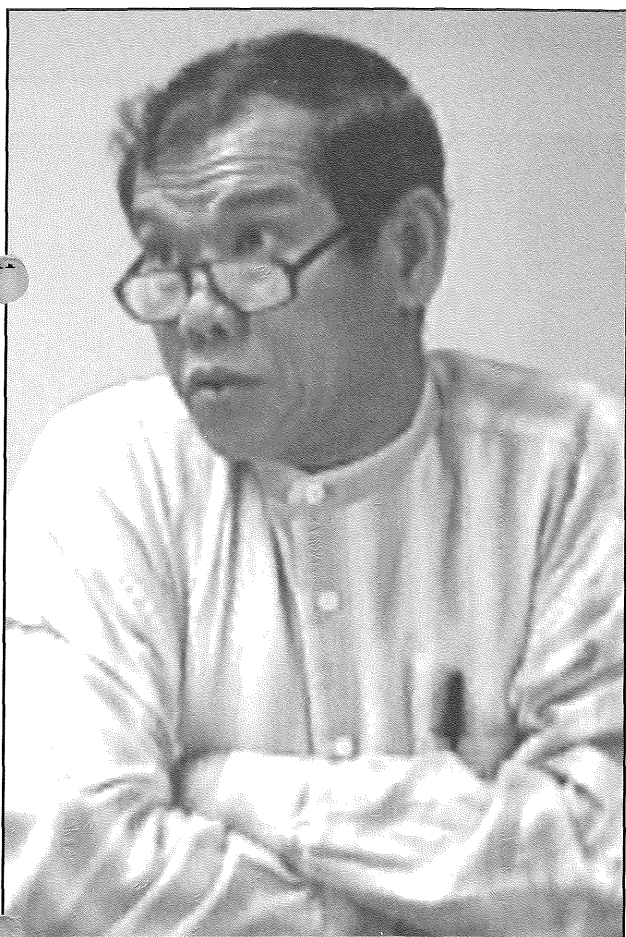
optimistic, and have hope in the future. And parent partners who respect and love each other are good models for adult relationships.

Many parents declared that children need encouragement, support, acknowledgment, and praise for effort and hard work. They need to hear often the words: “I know you can do it.” Children need lots of attention and guidance — one parent stated that most kids today are starving for attention. They need to know they are important or they may turn to drugs or gangs or other trouble to gain the attention they crave. As one parent said, while we are raising children, we need to place them “absolutely and completely in the center of everything we do.”

Several parents spoke of the need to cherish children — to love them unconditionally. They said home should be a refuge for children — a place where they are not ridiculed and are free from the tyranny of their peer group. Home should also be a place that offers opportunities to practice good behaviors and to learn assertiveness, which may be harder to do in peer groups.

Parents talked of the importance of accepting and getting to know children as they are, as individuals with unique personalities. One mother said she frequently tells her introverted son that he may be different from most other kids, but that it’s OK to be different.

“Demonstrating respect to children is as important as expecting it back.”



Parents used the words “reasonable pressure” and “nudging without pushing.”

Children should be offered acceptable choices, alternatives, and options. One mother said she tells her older children they can choose to enter the armed forces, go to college, or get vocational-technical training, but that finishing high school is not a choice. Parents spoke of positive reinforcement and discipline for their children, teaching right from wrong, and trusting children to make good decisions.

Participants said that it was essential that parents take responsibility for the actions of their children, hold them accountable for their behavior, and not help them too much. One mother told a story of her three-year-old daughter being molested by a seven-year-old neighbor boy whose mother refused to admit he had a problem. The boy is now older and in serious trouble for similar behavior.

One parent said that when children are small is the window of time to develop a foundation of discipline and appropriate behavior. They added that when children are of middle school and high school age, it is still important to know something about the families of their friends and where they are at all times.

Children should be assigned household and child care responsibilities that expand as they grow. These can include cleaning, laundry, yard work, cooking meals, babysitting, and helping younger siblings with homework. Parents of large families pointed out that with several children, there are frequent opportunities for older children to take on responsibilities and mentor younger children.

Organizations such as schools, park systems, and Scouting programs can create some of these opportunities for children from small families.

Children need approachable parents and other adults to speak with about their concerns and questions. This means parents who pay attention and listen carefully and who choose their words carefully and are conscious of their body language and tone of voice when they respond. One parent remarked that it is important to let children get to know us as people, as well as parents.

Parents said we must be truthful with children so that children can trust us and so they can learn from our mistakes as well as their own. Parents suggested scaling down activities so that family life is less frantic, limiting television, computers, and time on the Internet, and having unstructured time, as well as family meals and fun family activities together.

Parents said that children need structure, routine, and consistency. Several spoke of the need for clear and high expectations for children, although not so high that children feel overly pressured.

What do your children need to become this kind of an adult?

Communities also need to establish safe places for children just to gather and to play.

Parents said that children don't need a lot of money and "stuff," but that they do need to have their basic needs for housing, clothing, and food met. One parent commented that children should learn to recognize the privilege of having their basic needs met in the context of the larger community, country, and world.

Several parents discussed the need for a good education and good schools for our children. When their children are younger than school age, they spoke of the importance of making careful child care decisions. They said that an important element of good schools is dedicated teachers who can offer children broader knowledge for a better life and help them stay away from violence and drugs. Parents said that they needed to communicate with their children's teachers and be involved in their schools. Some parents felt it was essential they find the money to be able to send their children to college. And if parents have had less than positive experiences with school, it's important that they try not to pass on these negative feelings.

Parents who attend classes themselves and continue to read and learn new skills model the importance of education and life-long learning for their children. Children also learn that there are steps and sequences to achieving the things they want in life.

The importance of children understanding their cultural heritage was noted by many parents. As one mother put it, she wanted her children from early on to learn the full truth about African American history from the ancient past to the

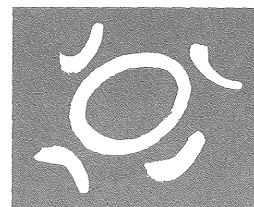


present. Parents spoke about teaching their children about the differences and essential human sameness among many cultures and trying not to be judgmental in front of their children. Immigrant families felt it was important to use their native language at home. They emphasized that it was critical that schools, health clinics, the legal system, etc. provide clear information in parents' native language about all opportunities and requirements. They wanted equal opportunity for themselves and their children, and to obtain this, they needed equal information.

Several parents spoke of how they wanted their children to have more than they had. But as one mother stated, "Children read through us when we lie. If we do good, they will do better. If we do bad, they will do worse. With the tools of new technology, they will master whatever we do."

Summary of Responses to Roundtable Questions:

What challenges do you face in helping your children grow up in this way?



Parents reported that it was very difficult to shield their children from negative societal influences such as drugs, gangs, and violence. Promoters of gangs and/or drugs sometimes lived in the same communities as the roundtable parents and sometimes came into their communities from other cities or states. Several parents talked about feeling very unsafe in their neighborhoods, seeing domestic abuse and drug dealing in the streets and hearing gunshots regularly.

Many parents spoke of feeling surrounded by negative influences in the media and new technology, which include television, movies, radio, music, computer games, internet, newspapers, and magazines. A parent spoke out against the common use of toy guns and other war toys for children.

Casual sex and violence are commonly featured, along with poor values of disrespect to women, men, parents, and other adults; racism; and sexism. Daughters may develop unhealthy attitudes about their bodies when comparing themselves to models who are impossibly thin, and sons may assume that women are inferior to men and useful primarily as sex objects or housekeepers.

Several parents spoke of how difficult it was to manage their children's behavior appropriately,

especially when they became teenagers, at which point some said they had no control.

A variety of parents complained that schools and social service agencies tell their children to call 911 when parents are emotionally or physically abusing them, which children can misinterpret and misuse as a way to prevent their parents from effectively disciplining them. Some immigrant families especially felt that in doing this, schools and other agencies were actively encouraging children to disrespect their parents.

*“How fast can you go?
How many things can you
pack into one day?
What are you accomplishing?”*

One parent stated that it was very hard to let children experience the natural and logical consequences of their behavior when they've made poor choices. A mother said that part of the challenge of being a parent was being there for children through illness and misbehavior.

Parents said they had trouble being consistent when their children were constantly testing them and that they were sometimes uncomfortable disciplining their children around other adults,

What challenges do you face in helping your children grow up in this way?

including relatives. A parent remarked that having too much freedom is destructive to children. In two parent and/or step- families, there may be differences between disciplinary styles of the involved parents, leading to tension and disagreement. One parent said that discipline is the hardest job she ever had. Another parent said, "I've learned never to say 'my child will never...'"

Repeatedly, parents described feeling that they did not have enough resources to raise their children the way they wanted. Chief among these resources were time and money. They spoke of the need for both parents as well as single parents to be employed in order to meet the basic needs of their children.

Health insurance is often impossible to afford or obtain without full time employment of at least one family member. Parents said employers often expected long hours and mandatory overtime. They felt that workers are not viewed as family members because society does not value children and sometimes scarcely tolerates them. A few commented on the inadequacy of a six week unpaid parental leave, and one compared this to Sweden, where either parent may take up to one year of paid parental leave after a baby is born.

One parent described how she had given up a full time job to become a night shift cab driver and felt that although she made less money, she had more time for her children. An immigrant mother cried as she told of leaving her children in her home country and moving alone to Minnesota so that she can work and send money home to feed and clothe them — something she was unable to do in her own country.

Poor or no public transportation and the lack of cars or driver's licenses often make it very difficult for parents to get to their jobs, go grocery shopping, get to appointments, and get around in general. One parent remarked that there is no automatic youth fare on city buses which makes them expensive for teens to use.

Several parents talked about how their lack of training and education prevented them from obtaining good paying jobs, but that they were unable to afford child care in order to attend school or training programs. They said it was often difficult to find good child care, especially child care that was culturally similar or compatible. Parents added that child care subsidies and other public assistance programs had waiting lists and delays and created many obstacles for parents who needed to use them.

One parent said that all parents should be able to choose whether to stay home to raise their children, but that recent welfare reform has made that decision impossible for low income families.



More than one parent stated that it seemed as if federal, state, county, and city governments were not really listening to families.

Another mother speculated that it seemed as if the rich want the poor to stay poor and that public and private policies deliberately make it very difficult to break out of poverty. One parent said, "I love government, but not one that works against me." Participants in one roundtable location said that their community had no attractive city parks for families and children. A parent complained of the necessity for constant fundraising campaigns for public and private schools.

Many parents said that they felt they did not have enough time to spend with their children because of work and because of family members participating in too many activities. They pointed out that children typically spend eight or more of their waking hours at school and with peers and only a few hours daily with parents.

Parents who are working long hours to make ends meet and often working weekends say that they are very frustrated that they cannot be with their children to teach them the way they want them to live. They said that the fast pace of society and technology made it very difficult to maintain family life. A few commented that they also had no time for themselves and were constantly exhausted.

Parents frequently spoke of frustrations with the public school system. Parents said that school staff seemed to view their relationship with parents as "me" and "them" instead of "we" and that they did not recognize or support the role of parents as teachers of their own children. Some felt schools actually pitted children against their parents by aggressively enforcing child abuse reporting laws. They stated that schools offered too many choices, with few rewards and little recognition for children who are doing well.

More than one parent said that their child was afraid to ride the school bus because it was dangerous and unpleasant. One parent said the school bus was sometimes a torture chamber for children. A few parents spoke of fights and violence in their children's schools.

Parents knew of few resources for prevention and felt that help only came after a crisis point. Some said that when children are having trouble, school staff often encourage parents to put children on medication rather than offering other forms of support.

An immigrant father commented that although his family is eager to learn and values education, he feels that public education in this country is not good even for white kids. He added that his children often felt put down at school. Some parents said that their children started skipping school from age 13 on and that it was difficult for them to monitor or prevent this truancy. Another

"Employers need to see people as a whole package that includes a family, and be supportive of making that family healthy."

parent stated that he felt school testing was not respectful of his family's culture. One father said when his son finally struck back at another boy who had been baiting and teasing him, he was suspended from the school, while the other (white) boy was given a mild scolding.

Several immigrant parents stated that their limited English makes it very difficult and frustrating to

What challenges do you face in helping your children grow up in this way?

communicate with schools, health care personnel, and other resource providers and prevents them from becoming aware of available resources, rights, and responsibilities. They pointed out that this results in a lack of equal opportunity for their families.

“The media is doing a masterful job of manipulating our children’s decision making.”

Prejudice and racism were seen by many parents as challenges to good family life. They felt their influence in schools, stores, on the street, and everywhere. Parents commented that many people are too quick to judge others. They said that children learn prejudice from their parents — that they initially have no problem playing with children who look different from themselves. A parent remarked that humans are often scared of what they don’t know, and that lack of exposure to different cultures can result in prejudice.

One immigrant parent spoke of how his culture is demonstrative and accepts and encourages dependency in childhood. He sees parents being told that they are not behaving appropriately when they carry their small children or hug and affectionately touch their adolescent sons and daughters. Another parent said that when groups of children of color are observed together in schools or other public places, they are automatically viewed as gangs. One father said with frustration



in his voice, “Just because we speak with an accent does not mean we are stupid or hard-of-hearing.”

Parents discussed the constant and often unnoticed influence of advertising on both adults and children and how this creates a materialism and consumerism that is difficult to afford. They said that sometimes two parents both work because of all the things they and their children want, not

because they need to in order to afford housing, clothing, and food.

One parent said that these consumer pressures resulted in people often living to work, not working to live. Another parent suggested that this can lead to a battle between materialism and being with one's children. Parents also said too many people judge others by the status of their employment and by the quality and quantity of their possessions. A father asserted that debt drives the American economy and without most people buying on credit, the economy would collapse.

Many parents talked about feeling lonely and isolated and emphasized the importance of other community members caring about and getting involved with everyone's children. Parents often don't know the parents of their child's friends. Adults are not always conscious that they are role models to the children of others, and they seldom comment on other children's behavior.

One mother who grew up in an African village described how if her parents didn't notice when she misbehaved, other relatives and adults did notice and made sure that they pointed it out to both the child and to her parents. These African adults and parents helped each other out in the common tasks of raising children.

Parents noted that since families move so often, they are usually far from their family and friends while they're raising children. This mobility, combined with the common philosophy that families take care of their own, frequently leads to loneliness and isolation.

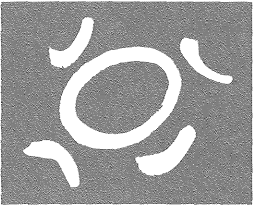
Peer influences on children were regarded by many parents as sometimes overpowering. Several parents remarked that their older children did not want to be seen with their families. As one father put it, "Peer groups are great playmates, but really bad parents."

One immigrant father commented that 10 years ago when his family first moved to the United States, their two children were young and their family worked well together and had hope. Now he feels his family is scattering and watching his family is like seeing a full color film turn to black and white. Another parent said her children's need to conform was almost unconscious and that it was a struggle to help them find a balance between fitting in and being true to themselves.

Some parents said that they did not know what to expect from their children at different ages and were not sure what was normal and what they should worry about. One parent said that it was challenging to figure out how to channel her children's self-absorption into positive directions. A few stated that they had grown up in unhealthy families, some in families where alcohol, drugs, and violence were common. They said that until they learned differently, they had no idea that families could be different from what they had known. These parents said they had to get over feeling that they did not deserve anything good to happen to them and that life consisted of going from one crisis to another.

"The fast pace of our society forces a lot of parents into fighting the battle between providing for kids versus being there to provide the lessons or even to be the example."

Summary of Responses to Roundtable Questions:



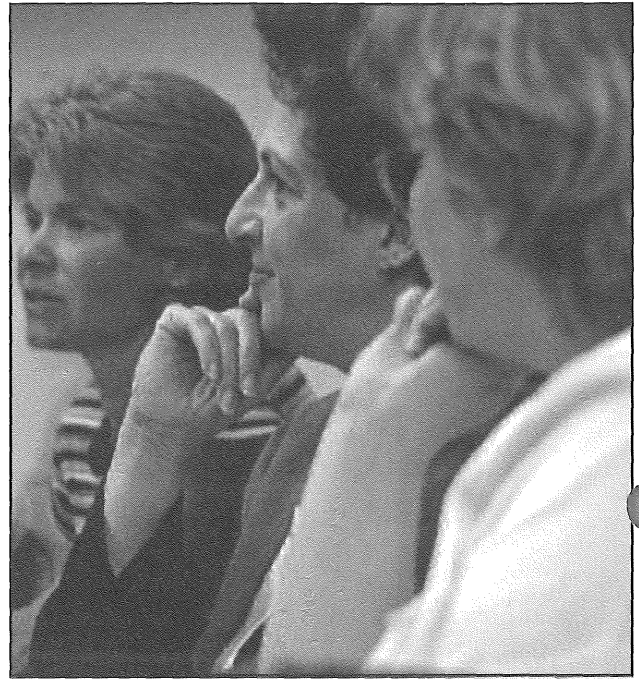
What are the strong points of your family that help your children grow?

Parents talked about having routines for bedtime and other daily activities and spending time together regularly. They identified the need for ongoing communication — discussing upcoming activities and daily events with family members and taking into account children's opinions and feelings. Giving two or three choices to children was one strategy for this.

Several parents spoke of the importance of family members sharing household responsibilities, having common goals, and working together. Regular family traditions such as making maple syrup in the spring, decorating the Christmas tree, and fishing after school were mentioned as enjoyable family time.

Vacations were seen as a break from daily routines and good opportunities for spending time together. Some parents said that when the family was all together after work, it was good time. They talked about limiting daily distractions such as television, videos, computer games, and Gameboy. Several said that when the television was off and their family was doing other things together either at home or during an outing, their family worked well together.

Two-parent families said that it was important for both partners to share child care responsibilities. One parent commented that when two parents worked swing shifts, this increased both of their involvement in the daily lives of their children.



One couple said that it was helpful for mothers and fathers to clearly define their respective roles and complement each other. Another couple said that in their home, mom takes care of the family's "in" end and dad takes care of the "out" end.

A single parent commented that in her household, parenting decisions were unanimous and there was no problem with conflicting parenting styles. Respect among all family members and siblings who helped each other were identified as important. Parents said that sufficient money, a lack of unusual stress or crisis, and taking one day at a time contributed to good family time.

Parents spoke of providing their children with food, clothes, and basic needs, along with warm emotional support. Some said they were proud that their families were able to live without public financial assistance.

Parents said that their families keep their own cultural traditions and rituals, including special foods, music, and holiday celebrations. One parent talked of how her family goes out together once a week to eat or to shop for needed items. Some parents spoke about the support they feel from their extended family and friends. Others said their openness to seek help and use resources outside of their families when necessary was a strength.

Parents said they spend as much time as possible with their families, include children in their daily lives, and pay attention to what children say and do. As one parent said, "They are part of everything we do and everywhere we are."

Families valued relationships that had mutual communication, respect, and trust. One parent commented that she had gotten out of an abusive

relationship and now felt that relationships should be something you wanted and chose, not something you had to have regardless of quality. Perseverance, endurance, and hard work were identified by several families as among their strengths, as was a sense of humor.

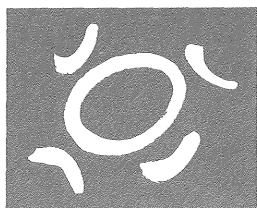
*"Our family works well
when the house is clean,
the energy good,
and we have enough money."*

One parent said she remembers what it was like to be a child. Another said she tries to encourage her children and tells them she loves them every night. A parent spoke of getting up early every morning to make sure the children got to school on time even though she worked late into the night.

Other parents said that they stress the importance of reading and learning with their children and read to their little ones regularly. One mother said that she and her husband model a love of reading with their children because it exposes them to many positives and teaches there is no limit to life's possibilities. She also felt it was important to continue reading to children as they grow older.



Summary of Responses to Roundtable Questions:



What are the strong points of your community that help your children grow?

Many parents indicated that community supports are very important to them.

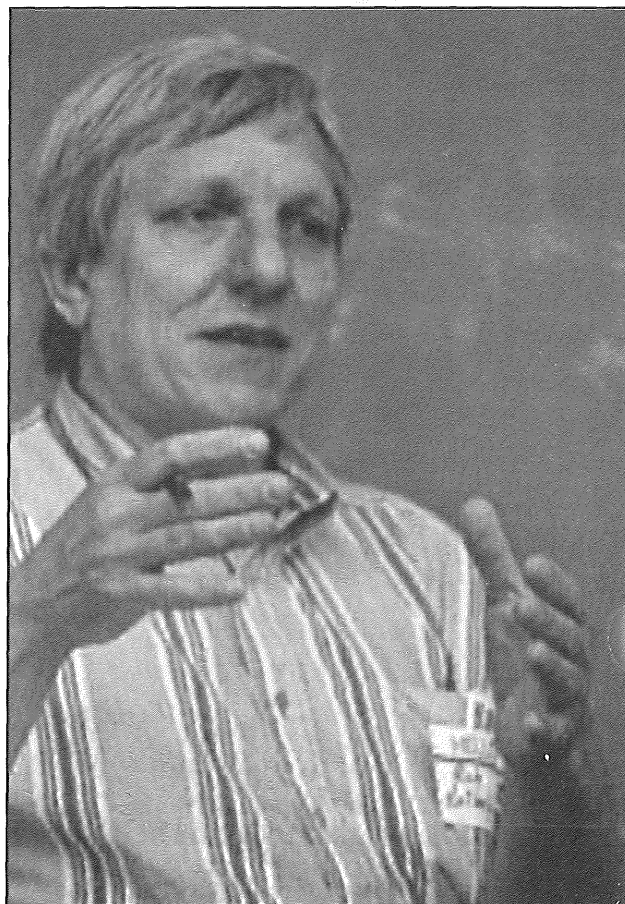
Several felt their neighborhoods and communities were revitalizing, with neighbors getting to know each other and becoming more aware of community resources. A resident of a busy urban neighborhood remarked that the police were responding on time these days, sometimes on horseback. Some parents noted the new community or family centers in their neighborhoods.

Parents commented on the importance of religion and churches and spoke appreciatively of park systems and park sports programs. Some were pleased when adults watch out for and speak to their and other's children and are aware that children are observing their adult behavior. They said adults in a community can set expectations for other adults and children who live there.

Parents frequently said that community programs were very important and helpful to their families. Several mentioned Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), a program for Minnesota families and children from birth to kindergarten age. One said she appreciated how ECFE parent educators share information about community resources and help parents resolve their child-rearing problems and issues. Another parent said she could not imagine being a parent without ECFE and that every state should have a program like it.

Other programs and resources noted by parents included: Head Start, 4H, early childhood special education, Way to Grow, teen parenting classes, parent support groups, and men's groups. As one parent put it, "There are lots of resources once you know about them."

Parents spoke of the diversity and ethnicity of their communities as an advantage and a challenge. As one parent said, "Communication is the key to peace; knowledge is the key to power." The availability of employment opportunities was





oted. One parent said that there were several job opportunities for people with good bi-lingual skills such as interpreter or translator, community connector, advocate for crisis center, and classroom or playground assistant.

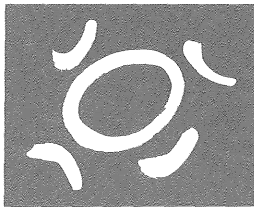
One Latino father noted that in his home country, elders help with children and the community creates safe gathering places and informal sports activities for children. He felt these community supports were less accessible and affordable in this country. A parent commented appreciatively on the American Indian centers in the Twin Cities, and the Cultural Beginnings child care efforts were seen as a plus.

Several parents saw their neighborhood schools as a good source of support. They mentioned the opportunities for adult and senior citizen involvement and occasional school-business partnerships. One parent noted that the high school was very helpful to her family when she had trouble dealing with her 18-year-old.

“Our children need to be placed absolutely and completely in the center of everything we do.”

Parents recognized the value of school bus transportation and summer school and community education opportunities. A few said that availability of a school-employed translator/interpreter is very helpful and also appreciated this feature at health clinics and court and legal services. In one location, parents were pleased that their community had passed its first bond issue for a new school.

Summary of Responses to Roundtable Questions:



What would help you achieve what you want for your children and family?

Parent Education

Many parents said that they needed more information about raising children from birth to adulthood. Several suggested programming similar to Minnesota's Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program be provided for families of elementary, middle, and high school students. Parents wanted help with discipline, new perspectives and new ideas, guidelines for parenting, and encouragement from others. They valued new friendships and better communication among parents with similar interests, as well as play opportunities for children of similar ages.

Parent-to-parent networking and school sponsored Parent Network programs were noted as helpful. Parents advised each other to choose one's battles as a parent and to keep high expectations for children. Several parents remarked that there were few rewards for or breaks from the challenges of parenting and wished for more recognition and positive reinforcement for their efforts, such as Moms' Nights Out.

Immigrant families said that specialized parent education on American child-rearing customs and laws, as well as other culture's traditional values, would enable them to choose among cultural customs when raising their children.

Adults Who are Present in Children's Lives

Multiple parents spoke of the need for parents in particular and adults in general to become more of a presence in their own and other children's lives. Adults should look children of all ages in the eye and notice them. Adults need to get to know and like children of middle and high school age and get past their typical fear of teenagers. Parents and adults need to demonstrate integrity and respect for others as well as their valuing of education and lifelong learning. Successful people should remember their community and support others to complete the circle of helping. A parent suggested that adults who have had difficult life experiences attempt to let go of any negativity, animosity, or bitterness and open themselves to growth and change.

Parents said it was important to nurture a sense of self-worth in themselves and their children. They talked about simplifying their lives and prioritizing their time to spend more time with their children, but added that there might be better ways to spend family time than attending every single hockey, soccer, or preschool event.

Parents can encourage their children to develop relationships with other adults. And they can open their homes to children, so that young people have safe places to gather.



Resources for Children

Many parents spoke of the need for more child care options so they can work and attend school or training programs. They especially noted their needs for quality infant care and for child care that is culturally specific. Many could use financial assistance with child care costs, particularly for infants and for multiple children, where child care costs can exceed salaries.

Parents often commented on the need for safe, fun, and affordable group activities for children, including after school and summer programs. They preferred that these activities integrate children of different ethnicity with each other and with adults.



Resources for Teens

Parents said that teens were interesting, challenging people who need more concrete opportunities for service work to balance the natural turning-in tendency of this age group. A parent suggested that a life skills class on such tasks as balancing a checkbook, changing oil in a car, smart shopping, and nutrition and cooking be offered to all teens. Simulated parenting assignments in which students are charged with total care of a baby doll or raw egg for a period of several days or longer were also mentioned as useful. Parents supported career education and job training programs that promote a future orientation for teens. And they wanted many more safe, pleasurable activities and gathering places for this age group.



Resources for Parents and Families

Acknowledging that there were often many existing resources for families, parents repeatedly said they want more information on these resources and school year and summer activities for children. For parents who speak English as a second language, information that is translated into their first language is essential. They stressed the need for more job training programs, career guidance, continuing education, and English language classes, as well as child care and funding such as scholarships and grants to allow them to attend these programs.

One parent suggested that specialized job training is required for people recovering from substance abuse or trauma or persons with criminal records. Immigrant families said they needed more literacy and citizenship classes. Several families spoke of their need for accessible, affordable health care that was of good quality.

Residents of urban areas wanted more streetlights in their neighborhoods, and parents from various areas of the state identified the need for more and better transportation options.

The need for public education to build awareness and acceptance of diversity and to raise awareness of consumerism issues was mentioned as important. And when it is necessary to seek public assistance, parents wanted fewer barriers placed in their way to using it.

What would help you achieve what you want for your children and family?

Messages to Schools

Parents of all ethnicity felt strongly that schools must clarify and maintain high expectations for all children and support all cultures in their educational materials and policies. They wanted students to study a wide variety of cultural heritages and become aware that there are variations in people's perception of race and historical experience. One parent specified the need for textbooks that tell the truth about African history, including colonialism and slavery.

Teachers should regard and enlist parents as teaching partners for the good of the students and children. Several parents added that in order for them to be involved in the classroom or in school events, they need help with child care and transportation, as well as informational materials translated into their first language.

One parent suggested that schools support families by teaching manners and morals to students. Another parent suggested that home schooling families be allowed regular access to school libraries, books, and lunch programs.

Messages to Employers

Parents in rural areas especially stressed that they need more employment and job opportunities. Rural immigrant families said they are eager to work and stay off public assistance, but that there are few opportunities for them to do so without long and difficult commutes. Many parents said they need more time with their children and more recognition for their child rearing tasks.

Benefits such as health care are needed with all full time jobs. Parents need personal leave for family obligations beyond sick leave for physical illness. Parental leave for the birth or adoption of a child is often too brief for parents and children to establish a healthy attachment, as well as too much of a financial hardship since it is unpaid.

Parents said it would be most helpful if employers provided child care at work sites or assisted with child care costs. They also suggested that businesses could sponsor summer camp tuition for low income children.





Messages to Law Enforcement

Immigrant families wanted an organizational vehicle for law enforcement, community residents, and parents to work together to counter and suppress gang and drug influences that were local to their communities, as well as incoming from other areas. In one rural community, participants stressed the need for a full time advocate to be employed by the police or other public agency to help immigrant parents protect their children from gangs and illegal drugs and to help suppress drug sales. They wanted the police to enforce youth curfews and question young adults who were out after curfew hours.

Parents suggested that police address vandalism and graffiti and not overlook it, since it affects the quality of life in their communities. It was important to parents that police respond promptly to all emergency calls regardless of the neighborhood from which they come.

And as noted earlier, parents want to be allowed to raise their children in their own way without living in fear that their children or neighbors will call 911 to report them for child abuse without legitimate cause.



Messages to Policymakers

In addition to the resources and issues discussed earlier, parents said repeatedly that they want more opportunities as taxpayers and community residents to comment on funding decisions and priorities that will affect their families' lives. For example, one parent said she has strong opinions about funding a children's museum or a hockey stadium and wants to be consulted before decisions are made. Parents said they wanted more and better voter education — that terms such as caucus, DFL, and IR were jargon to them. Some said they knew no one who voted in recent elections, due largely to cynicism about the political process and to lack of clear information. One parent said that information about reservation politics and resources would be helpful.

Parents told each other that they should work together for their families and communities. One parent said, "We are community. We are safety. We need to create and nurture, while we address issues of danger to our children and families." Parents said in addition to more funding for out-of-home child care, they want recognition and value for their work as parents.

Above all, roundtable participants said that they want the rest of society to pay attention and to listen to the concerns of parents. As one parent said, "Children are gifts that are ours to keep and cultivate and share with the world."

Appendices

Project Inception

In the summer and fall of 1997, a group of agencies, organizations, and individuals convened to begin a discussion. The discussion was focused upon the potential of identifying a collective voice of parents across the state of Minnesota around themes relating to desired outcomes for children and families, and parents' potential roles in realizing these outcomes. From these preliminary discussions, a collaborative was formed and project plan was identified and submitted to the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning for funding. The collaborative wishes to thank The Department for their support of this important project, and their ongoing commitment to building healthy families throughout our state.

A major strength of this initiative has been demonstrated by the commitment and dedication of the collaborating agencies/organizations, all of which bring specialized expertise and talent to the components of the proposed project for which they had responsibility. Listed below are the partnering organizations, including descriptions of their mission and vision.

The Minnesota Parenting Association

(MPA) is a non-profit organization founded in 1993 as the first state chapter of the National Parenting Association. MPA was established to create a climate that values the role of parenting in nurturing children and strengthening families. The mission of MPA is to assist in skill building, and to provide opportunities to develop and express a collective voice for parents and those who care about children. MPA supports policies and programs which recognize the importance of the family and role of the parent in nurturing children. Specifically, MPA endorses programs and policies which: recognize parents as partners in all aspects of their children's lives, respect the diversity of families, increase the influence of parents in policy-making, and provide program choices for all families. MPA and the Council for Parent Leadership are exploring parent leadership training models and effective strategies for implementing and sustaining parent leadership training statewide.

Cultural Beginnings is a project of the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network that began in 1993 to create culturally appropriate child care options by developing new forms of community and systems interactions that promote the full participation of diverse racial/ethnic communities. Specifically, the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network initiated the Cultural Beginnings project to: work toward changing the

formal care system to be more inclusive of families of color, support the informal child care system, and increase cultural sensitivity among child care providers.

The Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children (MnAEYC) is a nonprofit association of over 1,500 professionals in early childhood education and related fields working together on behalf of young children and their families. MnAEYC is an affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, which represents more than 100,000 members nationwide. The mission of MnAEYC is to educate and support adults who educate and care for Minnesota's young children so all may develop to their full potential. MnAEYC is guided by its vision that one day all Minnesotans will be invested in developing the full potential of every child. Integral to the mission and vision of the association are guiding principles which recognize the need to actively support parents in their role of "first teacher" of their children.

Child Care WORKS is a statewide coalition of organizations and individuals working through education and advocacy to improve the quality of child care and increase resources to help parents afford quality and child care professionals earn a living wage. For the past fifteen years, Child Care WORKS has been a positive force for changing public policies that impact the child care field and the needs of children, working parents, and providers. Child Care WORKS is devoted to building parents' sense of being important, active participants in building public policy that directly impacts their children and family and the life of their communities.

The ultimate success of this project has been realized by the one hundred (100) parents who have taken the time to share their hopes, visions, and dreams for their children and families, without whose honesty, integrity, and generosity, the collaborative could not have realized this summary. It is to these families throughout Minnesota that we dedicate this report, and our future work of making dreams and visions a reality.

Appendices

Project Rationale

In 16 focus groups conducted in 1997 through a joint effort of the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network, discussions were held with parents throughout the state regarding their experiences, concerns and recommendations concerning child care. In a summary of themes conveyed by the focus groups, major trends revealed that many parents across the state were concerned with: the availability and accessibility of child care (particularly non-standard hour care, care for children with special needs, and sick care), the cost of child care, the low wages earned by child care providers, and the need for increasing the availability of culturally-sensitive programs. In addition to these themes, parents in the focus groups also identified "providers that listen to and respond to parents" and "care and education as a home/school partnership" on a list of "most important" in the delivery of child care.

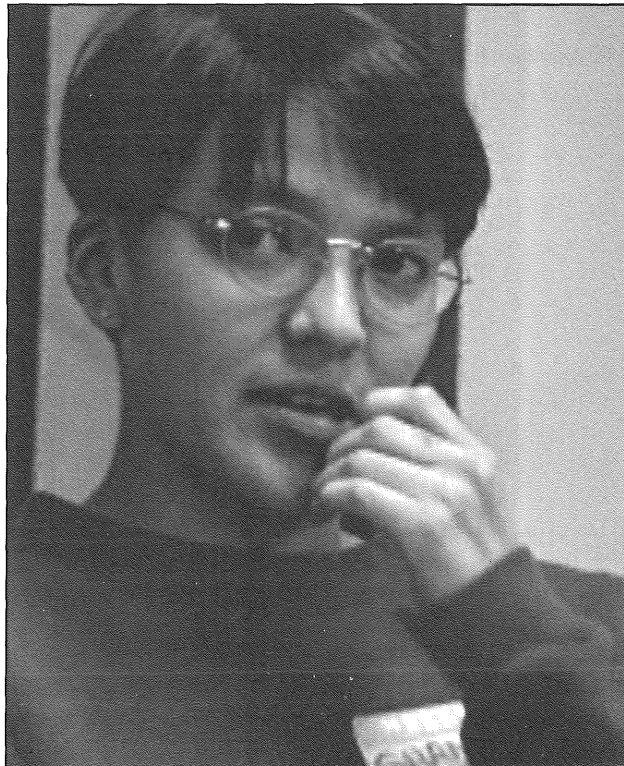
Information gathered through these focus groups demonstrated an awareness by parents of the critical issues facing the field of early care and education, as well as a vision of their respective roles in affecting positive outcomes for their children. It has been the goal of this initiative to build on the data that was gathered, and respond to what parents have identified as critical issues. The collaborative proposed to work with parents and communities to strengthen abilities and expand opportunities for partnerships between families and providers, as well as to empower parents in their role as advocates for their children and communities.

Information gathered by the Minnesota Parenting Association shows that more often than not, parents do not feel valued by society for their role as parents. Conversely, parents are often addressed as "the problem" instead of as "integral to the solution". Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has". Our initiative seeks to explore and address the outcomes that parents identify as critical regarding their children's development, and calls for the mobilization of parents toward the end of creating healthy families and supportive communities in Minnesota.

Research has demonstrated that families who stay involved, informed and influential in their children's education have children who do better in school (Epstein, 1994). The proposed project sought to address the need for parents to become active partners in all levels of decision making that affect outcomes for their children and family. Building on information gathered through focus groups conducted jointly by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral

Network, the collaborative proposed to work with parents in eight communities throughout the state in order to further define parents' desired outcomes for their children and families. Having identified these outcomes, parents have been challenged to identify strengths upon which they can build, as well as specific skills and resources that are necessary to their overall success as advocates and leaders in achieving positive outcomes for all children and families.

Representatives from key statewide organizations with a shared vision of the role of parents as agents of change gathered to create this model. Members of the planning team included **Roxy Foster**, Director of the Minnesota Parenting Association, **Louis Alemayehu**, Director of the Cultural Beginnings project, **Nancy Johnson**, Director of Child Care WORKS, **Eva Zygmunt**, Executive Director of the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children, **Sharon Henry**, Executive Director of the Greater Minneapolis Day Care Association, and **Jackie Dionne**, Former Program Director of Early Head Start at the Upper Midwest American Indian Center. The diversity of agency and organizational input in the proposed project is reflected through the creative use of existing programs and projects to accomplish objectives, minimizing duplication of efforts. Working together to realize a comprehensive model of parent leadership, the collaborative envisioned working with parents and communities to enhance their role as children's strongest advocates.



Appendices

Project Plan

The collaborative proposed a four step process that would set the stage for the development of a model of parent leadership in eight communities representative of Minnesota's ethnic, geographic, and economic diversity. The first step of the process involved a planning period. Members of the collaborative, along with parent representatives, convened to identify the eight communities to be involved in this first stage of a parent leadership model. The intention of the collaborative was to conduct roundtable discussions in these selected communities to gather information. The roundtables, co-conducted by an experienced, skilled facilitator along with a parent co-facilitator from the community in which the round table was held, provided parents the opportunity to discuss both their perceived and desired role in the education of their young children. Ultimately, through this conversation, parents had the opportunity to share their dreams and visions for their children. In addition to their vision for their children and families, the round table discussions presented parents with the opportunity to define the necessary components of making these dreams a reality. The collaborative and parent representatives, working together as a team in order to ensure a diversity of both organizational and personal perspectives, worked with the facilitators to design the format of the round tables. In order to eliminate barriers to attendance, all community roundtables had provisions for transportation, child care, a meal, and any required interpretation services.

The second stage of the process involved convening the community roundtables. Over a period of three months, parents representing eight communities in Minnesota gathered to discuss both their perceived and desired role in the education of their young children and their dreams and visions for their children and families. Parents were challenged to identify personal strengths they possess as well as barriers to the realization of these dreams. The events were either video or audiotaped, with consent of the attendees, in order to document a process whereby other communities might come together to discuss similar visions. The collaborative envisions the future use of this footage as an edited training tool for communities across the state interested in mobilizing on behalf of their families.

The third stage of the process entailed the distillation of information gained through the parent roundtables. Information compiled into this written document identifies common themes parents have expressed during the round table gatherings. Components of the document include: parents' perceived and desired roles in the education of their young children; parents' dreams and visions for children; familial strengths upon which to build in order to realize these goals; and identification of community supports vital

to families' ultimate success. With additional support, this document will be published in multiple languages in order to ensure accessibility of information to diverse communities throughout the state.

The fourth stage is currently being carried out through dissemination of this document to diverse communities throughout Minnesota. Utilizing existing networks, the collaborative is disseminating this document to parents, family advocates, child care providers, policy makers, and others. Published and disseminated prior to the beginning of the 1999 legislative session, this document serves as a voice for parents and has the potential to inform decision making at both community and state levels.

Ultimately, this six month process has provided a forum through which parents' collective voices can be heard. The collaborative views the culmination of these six months as the beginning of another process whereby parents and communities can, through self-identified means, realize their dreams and visions for children and families.

Appendices

For Further Reading



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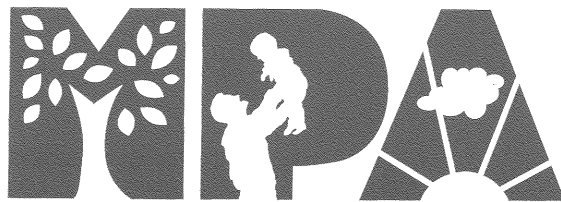
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About the Minnesota Parenting Association

The Minnesota Parenting Association is an affiliate of the National Parenting Association and is a non-profit, nonpartisan organization. Its mission is to assist in skill building, and provide opportunities to develop and express a collective voice for parents and those who care about children. MPA aims to create a climate that values the roles of parents in nurturing children and strengthening communities.

For more information, call:

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MINNESOTA PARENTING ASSOCIATION

Affiliate of National Parenting Association

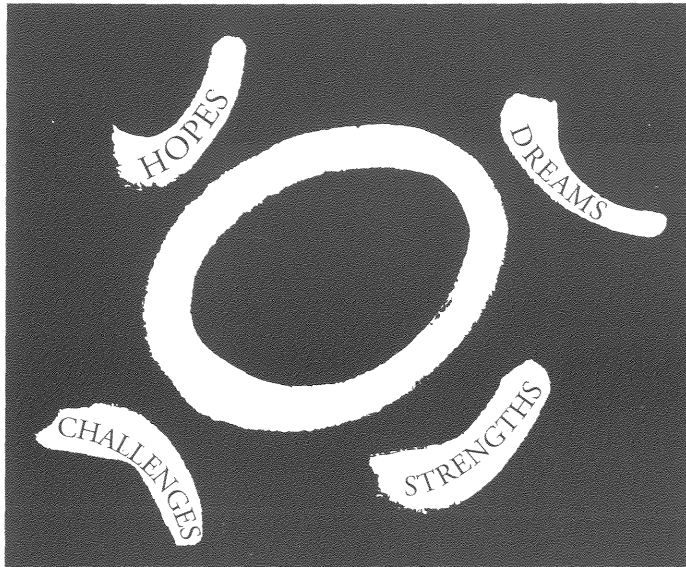
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651/646-8689



Hopes & Dreams, Challenges & Strengths

Minnesota Parents Talk About What Their Families Value

Above all, roundtable participants said that they want the rest of society to pay attention and to listen to the concerns of parents. As one parent said, "Children are gifts that are ours to keep and cultivate and share with the world."

School Readiness in Child Care Settings



*A Developmental Assessment
of Children in 22 Accredited
Child Care Centers*



Minnesota Department of **Human Services**
January 2005

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Executive Summary

School readiness has become an important issue in every community in our state. Parents and other close family members have the strongest influence on children's success. Communities also play important roles. And for most young children in Minnesota, early childhood care and education settings are a constant and influential factor in their lives. With decades of research that documents the linkages between high quality early childhood care and education and better developmental outcomes for children, many have asked about the role of high quality, community-based child care.

Most of our state's children regularly spend time in early childhood care and education settings, with 41 percent of 3-5 year-olds in center-based child care settings (Chase and Shelton, 2001). The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) piloted *School Readiness in Child Care Settings: A Developmental Assessment of Children in 22 Accredited Child Care Centers* to assess and better understand school readiness in these settings. The initiative focused on two specific questions:

- **How does readiness look for children attending these programs?** The school readiness of 226 children approaching kindergarten age in 22 accredited child care centers was assessed by specially trained teachers who had on-site supports.
- **Can child care program staff effectively use a tool to assess the school readiness of children approaching kindergarten entry?** Child care staff in accredited child care centers were trained in the use of a school readiness assessment tool to understand whether these programs could effectively use the same tool used in the previous Minnesota School Readiness Assessment studies. Of equal importance was investigating staff perceptions of the benefits and challenges of using the tool.

In addition, by using the same assessment tool, the Work Sampling System© (WSS) checklist, employed in previous statewide studies of the school readiness of children entering kindergarten, this study generates intriguing, timely and relevant information related to the readiness results of the children in this study compared with a broader population of young children in Minnesota.

The WSS checklist used in this study includes 32 indicators representing what children should know and be able to do at the end of the year before they enter kindergarten across five developmental domains – personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, the arts and physical development and health. The 226 children in this study were observed by child care center teachers in May and June prior to the start of Kindergarten in the fall and given a rating for each indicator:

Not Yet – indicating that the child cannot perform the indicator.

In Process – the skills, knowledge, behaviors, or accomplishments are intermittent or emergent, but are not demonstrated reliably or consistently.

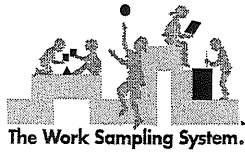
Proficient – the child can reliably demonstrate the skills, knowledge, behaviors, or accomplishments.

The study found:

- Almost twice as many children in the accredited child care center sample were rated as “Proficient” or school ready as compared to the statewide 2003 Minnesota School Readiness Study. Very few children in the accredited child care center sample were performing in the “Not Yet” range on any indicators within each domain.
- In general, research has found that children from higher income families typically perform better than children from lower income families. In this study of accredited centers, children from lower income families performed the same as their higher income counterparts. Children of color also performed at the same level as White/Caucasian children.
- Children from lower income families in these child care settings had much higher school readiness (proficiency) scores than lower income families in the statewide 2003 Minnesota School Readiness Study.
- In general, research has found that children with more educated parents typically perform better on achievement measures than children with less educated parents. In this study, children in the accredited child care center study did better than children in the statewide 2003 Minnesota School Readiness Study, regardless of the education level of their parents.

Based on the findings of this study, the department recommends that the following be considered:

1. Support child assessment in child care programs to support program improvement and build child care quality. Make training and technical assistance widely available on the use of Minnesota’s Early Childhood Indicators of Progress for what children should know and be able to do and on child assessment and other core competencies for practitioners.
2. Pilot child assessments in other types of child care settings to explore the feasibility of expanded use of WSS and other methods to other types of child care settings.
3. Strengthen the design of future child assessment initiatives in child care settings by randomly sampling child care settings, collecting data on program quality, and strengthening and enriching knowledge of the linkages between quality programming and child readiness outcomes.



The Minnesota
Work Sampling System®
Kindergarten Entry
Developmental Checklist

FOR TEACHER COMPLETION ONLY

INSTRUCTIONS

CORRECT: ●

INCORRECT: ○



FEMALE

MALE

USE A NO. 2 PENCIL ONLY

CHILD CARE CENTER	DATE OF BIRTH		
	MONTH	DAY	YEAR
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> Jan	<input type="radio"/> 19	<input type="radio"/> 0
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> Feb	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1
<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> Mar	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2
<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> Apr	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3
<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> May	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> Jun	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
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<input type="radio"/> 7	<input type="radio"/> Aug	<input type="radio"/> 6	<input type="radio"/> 7
<input type="radio"/> 8	<input type="radio"/> Sep	<input type="radio"/> 7	<input type="radio"/> 8
<input type="radio"/> 9	<input type="radio"/> Oct	<input type="radio"/> 8	<input type="radio"/> 9
	<input type="radio"/> Nov	<input type="radio"/> 9	
	<input type="radio"/> Dec	<input type="radio"/> 0	

LEGEND

(N) Not Yet—child cannot demonstrate indicator

(I) In Process—child demonstrates indicator intermittently

(P) Proficient—child can reliably demonstrate indicator

The Work Sampling System *Preschool-4 Developmental Guidelines* (4th edition) contains full descriptions of each performance indicator. (Number in parentheses indicates the page in the Guidelines where the indicator is described.)

I Personal and Social Development

A Self concept Fall

- 1 Shows some self-direction. (p. 1) (N I P)

B Self control Fall

- 1 Follows simple classroom rules and routines. (p. 1) (N I P)
2 Manages transitions. (p. 2) (N I P)

C Approaches to learning Fall

- 1 Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner. (p. 2) (N I P)
2 Attends to tasks and seeks help when encountering a problem. (p. 2) (N I P)
3 Approaches tasks with flexibility and inventiveness. (p. 3) (N I P)

D Interaction with others Fall

- 1 Interacts easily with one or more children. (p. 3) (N I P)
2 Interacts easily with familiar adults. (p. 3) (N I P)
3 Shows empathy and caring for others. (p. 4) (N I P)

E Social problem-solving Fall

- 1 Seeks adult help when needed to resolve conflicts. (p. 4) (N I P)

II Language and Literacy

A Listening Fall

- 1 Gains meaning by listening. (p. 5) (N I P)
2 Follows two- or three-step directions. (p. 5) (N I P)
3 Demonstrates phonological awareness. (p. 5) (N I P)

B Speaking Fall

- 1 Speaks clearly enough to be understood without contextual clues. (p. 6) (N I P)
2 Uses expanded vocabulary and language for a variety of purposes. (p. 6) (N I P)

C Reading Fall

- 1 Shows appreciation for books and reading. (p. 6) (N I P)
2 Shows beginning understanding of concepts about print. (p. 7) (N I P)
3 Begins to develop knowledge about letters. (p. 7) (N I P)
4 Comprehends and responds to stories read aloud. (p. 7) (N I P)

D Writing Fall

- 1 Represents ideas and stories through pictures, dictation, and play. (p. 8) (N I P)
2 Uses letter-like shapes, symbols, and letters to convey meaning. (p. 8) (N I P)

III Mathematical Thinking

A Mathematical processes Fall

- 1 Begins to use simple strategies to solve mathematical problems. (p. 11) (N I P)

B Number and operations Fall

- 1 Shows beginning understanding of number and quantity. (p. 11) (N I P)

C Geometry and spatial relations Fall

- 1 Begins to recognize and describe the attributes of shapes. (p. 12) (N I P)
2 Shows understanding of and uses several positional words. (p. 12) (N I P)

IV The Arts

A Expression and representation Fall

- 1 Participates in group music experiences. (p. 21) (N I P)
2 Participates in creative movement, dance, and drama. (p. 21) (N I P)
3 Uses a variety of art materials for tactile experience and exploration. (p. 21) (N I P)

B Understanding and appreciation Fall

- 1 Responds to artistic creations or events. (p. 22) (N I P)

V Physical Development and Health

A Gross motor development Fall

- 1 Coordinates movements to perform simple tasks. (p. 23) (N I P)

B Fine motor development Fall

- 1 Uses eye-hand coordination to perform tasks. (p. 24) (N I P)

C Personal health and safety Fall

- 1 Performs some self-care tasks independently. (p. 24) (N I P)

For teacher use only



**Child Care Quality Initiatives
&
School Readiness in
Child Care Settings: A Developmental Assessment
of Children in 22 Accredited Child Care Centers**

**Barb Yates
Deb Swenson-Klatt**

Child Development Services
Minnesota Department of Human Services
February, 2005

What is child care?

Child care provides both care and education for children while parents work or attend school

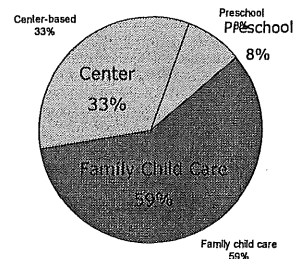
- Nearly 700,000 Minnesota children need child care while their parents work
- Approximately 222,000 children attend licensed child care
- 41% of 3-5 year olds in child care are in center settings
- 40% of children participating in care with family, friends or neighbors

What are the types of child care?

The majority (87% or nearly 13,000) of licensed child care settings are family child care. There are nearly 2,000 center-based settings. The number of child care slots are more balanced, with family child care representing about 60% of overall capacity.



Child Care Spaces Available



What is the level of quality in child care settings in Minnesota?

	Centers (N=841)	Preschools (N=553)	School-age (N=565)
Percent accredited	18%	7%	5%

	Family Child Care (N=12,778)
Percent accredited	.02%
Percent CDA	2.2%
Percent with 2-yr degree or higher	10.2%

How does DHS support child care quality?

Goal: to systemically improve child care quality across Minnesota

- School Readiness
- Professional Development
- Family, Friend and Neighbor Care
- Access for Low-income Parents



How does DHS support an infrastructure for child care quality improvement?

We fund a system for providing:

- Consumer education about child care quality
- Consultation to providers and parents
- Professional development to providers
- Scholarships for higher learning for providers
- Grants to providers for quality improvements
- Accreditation reimbursement

What was the FY 2005 funding level?

States are required to use 4% of the federal child care development block grant funds for quality, in addition to school-age/R&R and infant & toddler set-aside

- Child care resource and referral
- School-age care
- Care for children with special needs
- Support for hard to reach communities
- Grants to child care providers
- Infant and toddler supports
- Mentoring and training
- County quality support

Federal \$8.9 million; State \$1.2 million

DHS also administers early childhood learning facilities grants

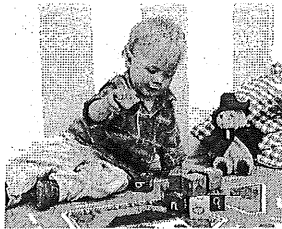
Good Start, Grow Smart

The President's *Good Start, Grow Smart* initiative is a Federal-State partnership that creates linkages between the federal child care quality set-aside and state public and private efforts to promote early learning.

- Each lead agency is asked to assess its State's progress toward developing:
 - *Voluntary guidelines* on language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts
 - *Assess the effectiveness and/or implementation* of the early learning guidelines
 - A *plan for the education and training of child care providers*

How does child care support school readiness?

Through complex play, socializing with adults and other children, and developing important physical, language, and cognitive skills.



When parents can focus on employment and training opportunities, families and children are better able to succeed.

How does DHS deliver services?

Child Care Resource and Referral programs

- State coordinating office
- Recently redesigned network of local agencies with statewide coverage

CCR&R is a network of early childhood experts who:

- Support parents searching for child care
- Train and consult child care providers
- Provide grants for child care providers
- Provide scholarships for higher education
- Coordinate TEACH@ and REETAIN programs
- Work with employers and engage community partners
- Collect and analyze data on child care trends

How does DHS support professional development?

Through specialized training and consultation to build practitioner skills and knowledge in core competency areas:

- Child growth and development
- Learning environment and curriculum
- Assessment and planning
- Interactions with children
- Families and children
- Health, safety and nutrition
- Program planning and evaluation
- Professional development and leadership



DHS is also engaged in coordinating child care training with higher education

New Information

■ Minnesota Household Survey

- Detailed account of formal and informal child care used by Minnesota families for children, ages 0 through 12
- Issues covered include quality, affordability, availability, and work-related concerns
- Tracks trends since 1999

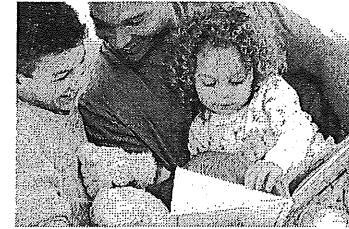
■ "Inside the Preschool Classroom"

- A study of center program quality in MN

**School Readiness in
Child Care Settings: A Developmental
Assessment of Children in 22 Accredited
Child Care Centers**

School Readiness in Child Care

- Study context:
 - Strong interest in school readiness
 - 41 percent of 3-5 year-olds are cared for in center-based child care settings



School Readiness in Child Care

- Study questions:
 - How does readiness look for children attending these programs?
 - Can child care program staff effectively use a tool to assess the school readiness of children approaching kindergarten entry?

School Readiness in Child Care

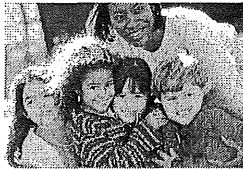
- National Education Goals Panel
 - By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.
 - Components of school readiness:
 - Readiness of the child
 - Schools' readiness for children
 - Family and community supports contributing to school readiness

School Readiness in Child Care

Minnesota's Definition of School Readiness

The skills, knowledge, behaviors and accomplishments that children know and can do as they enter school.

- Physical well-being and motor development
- Social and emotional development
- Approaches to learning
- Language development
- Cognition and general knowledge
- Creativity and the arts



School Readiness in Child Care

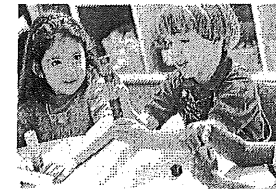
- Selection of Work Sampling System of Child Assessment
 - Used in 2002 and 2003 statewide School Readiness studies
 - Commonly used in many early childhood settings
 - Aligned with MN Early Childhood Indicators of Progress
 - Meets all the national criteria of fair, authentic assessment – assessment based on everyday learning experiences of children over time.

School Readiness in Child Care

- Each child's performance rated for each indicator as:
 - Not Yet
 - Not yet acquired
 - In Process
 - Intermittent or emergent, not reliable or consistent
 - Proficient
 - Reliably demonstrates on a consistent basis

School Readiness in Child Care

- An exploratory study
- An invitational sample that included 22 high quality (i.e. accredited) child care programs
- Minnesota Work Sampling System Kindergarten Entry Developmental Checklist
- 226 preschoolers entering kindergarten in Fall, 2004
- 32 child care teachers



School Readiness in Child Care

- Study Limitations
 - Not a random sample, results can not be generalized, only apply to 22 centers in the study
 - Comparisons to 2003 Statewide Study could imply that impact of programming is being evaluated
 - Potential teacher bias in rating children

School Readiness in Child Care

- Child Characteristics
 - Household income
 - Parents' level of education
 - Race/ethnicity
 - Duration of enrollment



School Readiness in Child Care

Household Income (Gross annual)	Center Study	2003 Statewide Study
\$0 - \$35,000	26%	28%
\$35,001 - \$55,000	10%	23%
\$55,001 or more	64%	49%

School Readiness in Child Care

Parent Education	Center Study	2003 Statewide Study
Some high school or less	.5%	4%
High school diploma/GED	8%	19%
Trade school or some college	23%	34%
Associate degree	6%	11%
Bachelor's degree	32%	22%
Graduate/professional degree	30%	9%

School Readiness in Child Care

■ Race & Ethnicity

- Accredited Center Study
 - Non-White (single and multi-race) 31%
 - White/Caucasian 69%
- 2003 Statewide Study
 - Non-White (single and multi-race) 18.5%
 - White/Caucasian 81.5%

School Readiness in Child Care

■ Duration of Enrollment

- Less than one year 18%
- 1-2 years 15%
- 2-3 years 26%
- 4 years or more 41%

School Readiness in Child Care

- **Finding #1: Children in the accredited center study performed well across all developmental domains.**
 - Almost twice as many children in the accredited center sample were rated as “Proficient” or school ready as compared to the statewide 2003 study.

School Readiness in Child Care Accredited Center Study

Domain	Readiness Levels by Domain		
	Not Yet	In Process	Proficient
<i>Physical Development</i>	0%	9%	91%
<i>Personal & Social Development</i>	0%	25%	75%
<i>The Arts</i>	0%	18%	82%
<i>Language and Literacy</i>	1%	16%	84%
<i>Mathematical Thinking</i>	1%	20%	79%

School Readiness in Child Care 2003 Statewide Study

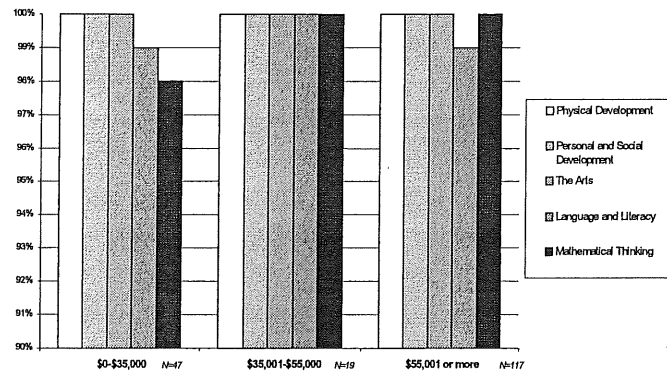
Domain	Readiness Levels by Domain		
	Not Yet	In Process	Proficient
Physical Development	2%	41%	57%
Personal & Social Development	9%	44%	47%
The Arts	6%	48%	47%
Language and Literacy	12%	46%	43%
Mathematical Thinking	11%	50%	40%

School Readiness in Child Care

- **Finding #2:** In general, research has found that children from higher income families typically perform better than children from lower income families. In this study, children from lower income families performed the same as their higher income counterparts. Children of color also performed at the same level as White/Caucasian children.

School Readiness in Child Care Developmental Assessment Results by Household Income

Domain averages for children scoring in process or proficient along domains,
by family income before taxes, N=183

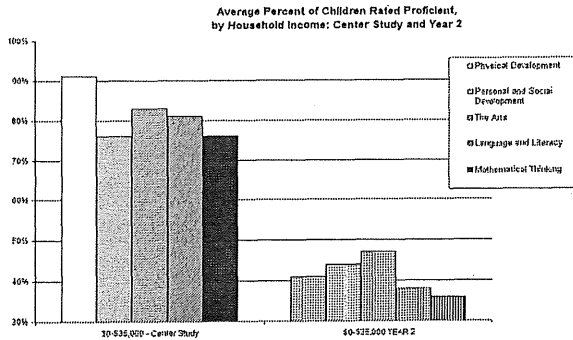


School Readiness in Child Care

- **Finding #3:** Children from lower income families in these child care settings had much higher school readiness (proficiency) scores than lower income families in the statewide 2003 Minnesota School Readiness Study.

School Readiness in Child Care

Developmental Assessment Results by Household Income in Center Study and 2003 Statewide Study

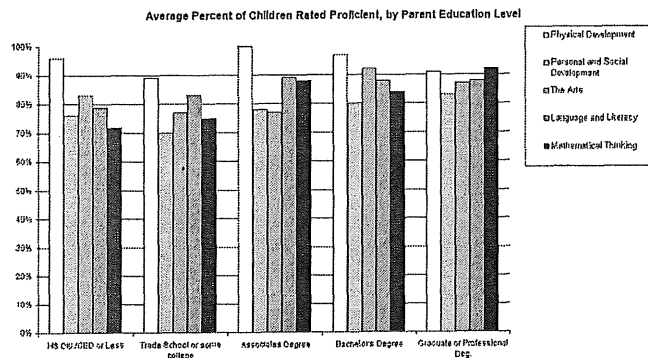


School Readiness in Child Care

- **Finding #4:** In general, research has found that children with more educated parents typically perform better on achievement measures than children with less educated parents. In this study, children in these accredited centers did better than children in the statewide 2003 Minnesota School Readiness Study, regardless of the education level of their parents.

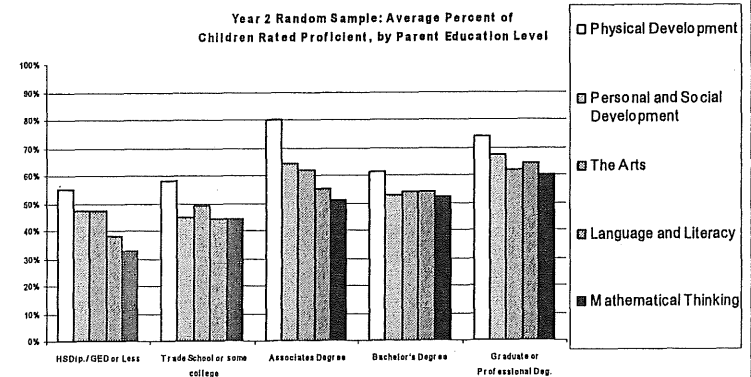
School Readiness in Child Care

Developmental Assessment Results by Parent Education Level in Center Study



School Readiness in Child Care

Developmental Assessment Results by Parent Education Level in a Random Sample of 2003 Statewide Study



Note: Year 2 data above do not represent the full Year 2 sample but are a random sample created to replicate the parent education configuration in the Accredited Center Study.

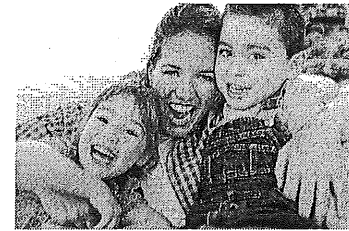
School Readiness in Child Care Conclusion

- Children in sample programs performed well along all domains.

“This study cannot offer definitive evidence that children attending accredited child care center programs are more ready for school. However, the findings of this study seem consistent with more rigorous research in this area.”

School Readiness in Child Care Conclusion

- The Work Sampling checklist can be used by child care programs when supports for program staff are provided.



School Readiness in Child Care Recommendation

- Support child assessment in child care programs to support program improvement and build child care quality.
 - Make training and technical assistance widely available on the use of Minnesota’s Early Childhood Indicators of Progress and on child assessment and other core competencies for practitioners.

School Readiness in Child Care Recommendation

- Pilot child assessments in other types of child care settings to explore the feasibility of expanded use of WSS and other methods to other types of child care settings.



School Readiness in Child Care Recommendation

- **Strengthen the design of future child assessment initiatives in child care settings by randomly sampling child care settings, collecting data on program quality, and strengthening and enriching knowledge of the linkages between quality programming and child readiness outcomes.**

School Readiness in Child Care

- For copies of full report:
www.dhs.state.mn.us and click on Children, then Child Care, then Research
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