

The Minnesota Office of Early Learning's

2012 Great Workforce Annual Report



Minnesota Department of Education
Minnesota Department of Health
Minnesota Department of Human Services
Child Trends

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Table of Contents

Introductory letter.....2

Context and purpose of this report3

Initiatives related to training and trainer development.....4

Initiatives related to Relationship-Based
Professional Development.....6

Initiatives related to credentials, certificates and diplomas.....9

Initiatives related to establishing a cross-sector set of
Core Competencies for early educators.....10

Initiatives related to financial supports.....11

Initiatives related to the Minnesota Professional
Development Registry.....12

Welcome to the Office of Early Learning's first Great Workforce Annual Report!

This report is the first inter-agency inventory of many of Minnesota's early childhood professional development initiatives. Here you'll find brief profiles of Great Workforce initiatives involving the Office of Early Learning and our partners named in Minnesota's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant. We will use this inventory to inform our continued unified efforts to build and support Minnesota's Great Workforce. We hope this inventory will also provide you with useful information about pieces of our statewide professional development system.

Methods and expectations about care and education for young children have changed dramatically in the last 20 years. These changes are a reflection of changes in family structures and economics, of increasing diversity of the population, and, most of all, of our exploding understanding of how the human brain develops. With the advent of Parent Aware, our quality rating and improvement system, changes have accelerated even further. The impact of these changes for our field is an "increased intentionality." We are called upon to be more knowledgeable, planful, versatile, collaborative, and show proof of impact like never before. Critical in learning to increase intentionality are professional development learning experiences of all kinds including those listed within this report.

Getting from where we've been (in providing care and education) to where we need to be (this new level of intentionality) requires agreement on the direction we're headed, the road we'll take to get there, what we'll do along the way and timelines for reaching our destination. Please consider this inventory of professional development learning experiences an essential tool in planning our collective journey.

Melvin and Erin

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Context and purpose of this report

In December 2011, Minnesota was awarded a federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant in the amount of \$45 million from the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant, through the U.S. Department of Education, to provide children with high needs access to high-quality early learning and development programs. More specifically, the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant provides Minnesota with \$5.3 million in funding to create a shared framework for professional development and align pre-service and in-service instruction around a common set of goals. In addition, it directs significant new resources to early educators to help them advance up the state's Career Lattice and increase their knowledge and skills to better support children's outcomes. This funding is in addition to the ongoing investments in the professional development of the early care and education workforce that are made through the Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota Department of Human Services, and Minnesota Department of Health.

Included in Minnesota's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant plan are two goals related to Professional Development data:

1. To increase Minnesota's ability to report on progress toward aligning professional development providers' programs and initiatives with the Core Competencies and the Career Lattice.
2. To increase Minnesota's capacity to track the number of early care and education professionals progressing on the Career Lattice over time.

The goal of the Great Workforce Annual Reports will be to meet these reporting and tracking goals by documenting the efforts and initiatives of the Office of Early Learning and its partners and, where possible, measuring the impact these efforts have on the workforce over time.

In 2012 the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) contracted with Child Trends, an independent, non-profit research organization, to collect information about the initiatives that are playing a role in the Professional Development System. Information was gathered on initiatives related to:

- Training and trainer development
- Relationship-Based Professional Development (RBPD)
- Credentials, certificates, and diplomas
- Core Competencies Framework alignment
- Financial supports
- The Professional Development Registry

For each initiative, Child Trends surveyed and interviewed a key contact person knowledgeable about the initiative and used the provided information to develop a profile of each initiative. Below are brief descriptions of each initiative based on the profile.

Initiatives related to training and trainer development

Six initiatives related to training or trainer development were operating or under development in 2012:

- Enhancing the Eager-to-Learn platform
- Providing training in more languages
- Extending expertise on caring for young children with disabilities
- Aligning tribal and state professional development approaches
- Building a bilingual and bicultural training community
- Refining trainer approval and support procedures at the Minnesota Center for Professional Development

All aim to improve the quality and variety of trainings available to early care and education providers in Minnesota. A brief summary of each initiative follows.

Enhancing the Eager-to-Learn platform: Eager-to-Learn is an innovative, community based, e-learning program of Child Care Aware of Minnesota. Courses are designed to provide quality, accessible, educational opportunities for people who care for children. Eager-to-Learn is built on research supporting the effectiveness and universal reach of the online learning model. While using technology to bring people together, the program includes the ideals of classroom learning, such as community building and communication. A community of trained professionals offers courses covering a wide range of topics which focus on children from birth to age 12. Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant funds will be used for technology enhancements to the Eager to Learn platform including classroom structural updates and video enhancements.

Providing training in more languages: Currently, 54 hours of foundational (introductory-level) training are available on topics that will meet the Parent Aware training indicators. The current initiative will translate and adapt those 54 hours of foundational training into Spanish, Somali, and Hmong. These funds will also support the development of an additional 108 hours of advanced training that will meet Parent Aware training indicators, including translation/adaptation in Spanish, Somali and Hmong languages.

Extending expertise on caring for young children with disabilities: The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) funds and coordinates the implementation of three cadres of master trainers to provide professional development through a regional professional development system called the Centers of Excellence for Young Children with Disabilities. The purpose of this system is to improve the outcomes of young children with disabilities (from birth to age five) and their families. Selected master cadre members receive professional development by national experts and then pass their expertise on to early care and education providers who work with children with disabilities. There are three master cadres, each focused on one of the following content areas or models: Technical Assistance Center on Social/Emotional Intervention, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse children and families, and Family-Guided Routines-Based

Intervention. The master cadre members may also facilitate communities of practice and learning cohorts to support the ongoing implementation of evidence-based practice.

Aligning tribal and state professional development approaches: The Minnesota Department of Human Services funds the Minnesota Tribal Resources for Early Childhood Care (MN TRECC), which is a part of the Child Care Aware of Minnesota system, to provide child care resource and referral-related services to tribal communities in Minnesota. As part of that effort, MN TRECC has been working with the tribal reservations to develop a tribal professional development system that is aligned with the professional development system that is led by the Minnesota Center for Professional Development (MNCPD). Implementation of this effort will begin July 2013 with MN TRECC assisting each tribe in creating local advisory committees. Using approval criteria aligned with that of the MNCPD, these committees will ensure recruitment and approval of tribal trainers, development of cultural training curricula, and inclusion of tribal training and trainers in the MNCPD Registry.

Building a bilingual and bicultural training community: Recognizing the cultural and linguistic diversity of Minnesota caregivers and educators, and the need to provide all early care and education providers with high-quality professional development opportunities, the Office of Early Learning has committed to increasing the number of bilingual and bicultural trainers in the state of Minnesota. The Department of Human Services has issued a Request for Proposals for a contractor to recruit and support bi-lingual, bi-cultural trainers to provide training for programs preparing for or participating in Parent Aware. Current bilingual, bicultural trainers will be recruited to offer at least one Training of Trainers (TOT) to other bilingual, bicultural individuals and will coordinate chats with potential trainers with the help of Eager to Learn. Starting in summer 2013, current trainers will be going through TOT trainings on topics such as: Early Childhood Indicators of Progress, authentic observation, curriculum and assessment, creating cultural connections, basic child development, and introduction to children with special needs.

Refining trainer approval and support procedures at Minnesota Center for Professional Development: The Minnesota Center for Professional Development (MNCPD) is responsible for ensuring the quality of trainers and trainings offered to child care and early education professionals in the State of Minnesota. To become an MNCPD-approved trainer, a potential trainer must provide: documentation that they have completed relevant college-level credits; documentation that they have completed training on best practices in adult education; documentation of experience in direct service; and letters of reference. These materials are then reviewed by experts in the field to determine the level at which a trainer is qualified to train. Similarly, for a training to be approved by MNCPD, the trainer or training sponsor organization must submit a detailed description of the course content, its learning objectives, and how the course content relates to Minnesota's Core Competencies. Those materials are then reviewed by experts in the field to determine whether the course meets Minnesota's standards. To ensure that trainers have the support needed to produce high quality trainings for the workforce, MNCPD has been tasked with reviewing and refining their processes for trainer approval and support.

Initiatives related to Relationship-Based Professional Development

Ten initiatives related to Relationship-Based Professional Development (RBPD) were operating or under development in 2012:

- Advising early care and education providers on professional development
- Partnering with Minnesota Reading Corps to promote literacy
- Promoting health and safety through child care health consultation
- Providing supports to early care and education providers serving children with special needs
- Improving the quality of classroom interactions, as measured by the CLASS observational tool
- Supporting quality improvement for family child care providers through MLFCCA mentoring
- Supporting quality improvement for child care centers via MnAEYC accreditation facilitation
- Establishing standards for Relationship-Based Professional Development

All aim to support Minnesota child care providers/early educators by providing individualized supports to improve the quality of their practice. A brief summary of each follows.

Advising early care and education professionals on professional development:

Child Care Aware Professional Development Coordinators meet one-on-one with early care and education providers to inventory prior learning, conduct individual training needs assessments, recommend future learning opportunities and set goals related to professional growth and development. Professional Development Advising is a relationship-based support that focuses on ensuring that child care professionals are involved in professional development opportunities and that they are documenting their professional development in some manner. Another main goal is to encourage child care professionals to pursue higher education (credit-based) opportunities.

Partnering with Minnesota Reading Corps to promote literacy: The Minnesota Reading Corps is engaged in a project designed to promote literacy in young children. Reading Corps members will implement an early literacy curriculum with children in family child care homes located within the Northside Achievement Zone and the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood. In addition to the services provided directly to children, Reading Corps members are also providing relationship-based supports to the family child care providers in whose homes they are working. By watching and engaging with Reading Corps members and attending trainings, family child care providers will learn and improve their own skills to promote literacy in their homes. In order to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and encourage partnerships, a coach from Think Small will be assigned to each provider and Reading Corps member pair.

Promoting health and safety through Child Care Health Consultation: The Minnesota Department of Health is issuing a Request for Proposals for one or more contractors

to offer Child Care Health Consultation in the four Race to the Top Transformation Zones. Child Care Health Consultants will offer relationship-based supports in the Transformation Zones and also provide individualized information and recommendations through telephone or electronic communication to all early care and education providers participating in Parent Aware. Parent Aware early care and education providers and/or Quality Coaches can contact Child Care Health Consultants for on-site assessment, skills training and technical assistance for factors related to child health and safety.

Providing supports to early care and education providers serving children with special needs: Minnesota is committed to increasing access to high-quality care and education, particularly for children with special needs, yet early care and education providers often lack the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of these children. For this reason, the Minnesota Department of Human Services is contracting with the Center for Inclusive Child Care at Concordia University to provide relationship-based coaching and consultation services to programs participating in Parent Aware that are serving children with special needs or suspected special needs such as developmental disabilities, special health care needs, and behavioral disorders.

Improving the quality of classroom interactions, as measured by the CLASS observational tool: The Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) measures the quality of classroom interactions, both between adults and children and among children in the classroom. Scores on the CLASS have been found to positively correlate with child outcomes and are therefore used as one factor in determining the star rating of child care centers seeking a 3- or 4-star rating through the full rating process. As part of Parent Aware quality improvement supports, CLASS coaches from the Child Care Aware system are working onsite with teaching staff in child care centers to support high-quality classroom interactions, with a particular focus on Instructional Support, the domain of the tool on which programs tend to score lowest.

Supporting quality improvement for family child care providers through MLFCCA mentoring: Individuals with experience as family child care providers are trained and supported by the Minnesota Licensed Family Child Care Association (MLFCCA) to mentor other family child care providers on program quality improvement. Mentors work one-on-one with family child care providers to change their practices so that they meet Parent Aware standards and National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC) accreditation standards. To gauge improvement, mentors conduct child assessments pre- and post-mentoring using Teaching Strategies GOLD.

Supporting quality improvement for child care centers via NAEYC accreditation facilitation: With funding from the United Way and the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children operates the Accreditation Facilitation Project. This initiative provides mentoring, coaching or consultation (depending upon the program's needs) to support child care centers seeking NAEYC

accreditation. In all cases, programs receive relationship-based supports to set goals, work on quality indicators, and document quality practices with the ultimate goal of achieving accreditation.

Establishing standards for Relationship-Based Professional Development: As mentioned above, the Minnesota Center for Professional Development (MNCPD) already has a set of standards for individuals wanting to offer training to early care and education providers in Minnesota. This initiative will create a set of standards for professionals who offer relationship-based professional development (RBPD) services. Those meeting the standards will be approved as RBPD Specialists. Two entities - MNCPD and the University of Minnesota's Center for Early Education and Development – have been working together to propose standards and approval criteria. The proposal will include a framework for approving a RBPD Specialist and for granting early care and education providers clock hour credits for time spent with an approved RBPD Specialist.

Initiatives related to credentials, certificates, and diplomas

Four initiatives related to credentials, certificates, and diplomas were operating or under development in 2012:

- Providing scholarships to support CDA candidates
- Revising and Supporting the Minnesota Child Care Credential
- Developing a credential for providers working with infants and toddlers
- Promoting Credit for Prior Learning

All aim to expand opportunities for Minnesota child care providers/early educators to earn recognition for professional advancement. A brief summary of each initiative is provided below.

Providing scholarships to support CDA candidates: Funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and implemented through a contract with Child Care Aware of Minnesota, this initiative provides scholarships to help early care and education providers receive their Child Development Associate (CDA) and helps them understand the process of completing the CDA. Child Care Aware provides scholarships for training, the assessment fee, or for renewal. In addition, Prevent Child Abuse MN also offers free training and support to providers who are pursuing a CDA.

Revising and Supporting the Minnesota Child Care Credential (MNCCC): First offered in 2011, the MNCCC provides 123 hours of training, all of which can be applied toward meeting the training requirements for the national CDA credential. The Department of Human Services funds partial reimbursements for the cost of completing the MNCCC. Child Trends conducted an evaluation of the credential's implementation and providers' experiences in pursuing the credential. Based on the results of the evaluation, the MNCCC is under revision. The revised MNCCC will be designed to meet all of the training indicators in Parent Aware.

Developing a credential for providers working with infants and toddlers: Currently under development, the Minnesota Infant/toddler credential is designed to recognize the special skills and expertise that are needed to provide high quality care and education to infants and toddlers. The new credential will meet all of the training requirements for Level 1 of the Minnesota Infant/toddler mental health endorsement program and some of the training indicators in Parent Aware.

Promoting Credit for Prior Learning (CPL): Experiential learning is learning that occurs as a result of life experience that may include paid and volunteer work, noncredit courses and workshops, work study, service learning, and so forth. Experiential Learning Assessment is a systematic process to identify the learning an individual has gained through life experiences and assess it for college credit. The Minnesota Center for Professional Development (MNCPD) coordinates, promotes, and provides information about how to receive Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) but does not currently offer direct advising on CPL, nor can they award college credits for CPL. Each institute of higher education has its own policy and process for awarding CPL.

Initiatives related to establishing a cross-sector set of Core Competencies for early educators

Currently, Minnesota has multiple frameworks for describing the knowledge and skills that early educators ought to demonstrate. As a result, early educators may face challenges in moving across early childhood sectors or in advancing their education. Two initiatives to establish a cross-sector set of Core Competencies were operating or under development in 2012:

- Aligning Board of Teaching Standards with the Core Competency framework
- Establishing articulation agreements within MnSCU

Both aim to create a single set of expectations for early educators, regardless of the sector in which they work and to support a clear path for educational and professional advancement. Below is a brief summary of each initiative.

Aligning Board Of Teaching standards with the Core Competency Framework: The Minnesota Board of Teaching Standards describe expectations about the knowledge needed by licensed teachers working in early childhood. Minnesota's Core Competencies for early childhood early care and education providers describe the skills and abilities early care and education providers need to be able to demonstrate to work effectively with young learners. This initiative aims to align the Board of Teaching Standards with Minnesota's core competencies. The final product will be a new set of core competencies and a framework for using them.

Establishing articulation agreements within MnSCU: Articulation agreements are agreements between two institutions of higher education that allow students to transfer into a new school with some kind of credit for their work at the other school. Minnesota currently lags behind other states such as Wisconsin in articulation agreements in early childhood. In July, 2012 MnSCU Chancellor Steven Rosenstone brought together a small group to explore the issues of articulation within the MnSCU system early childhood program. As a direct result, there is on-going communication and work being done by the MnSCU 2- and 4-year early childhood programs to work on articulation agreements.

Initiatives related to financial supports

Three initiatives related to financial support for early care and education providers pursuing professional development were operating or under development in 2012:

- Redesigning T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® MINNESOTA Scholarship program
- Retaining the early care and education workforce through the REETAIN bonus program
- Offering low-cost training to meet Parent Aware training indicators

All aim to make professional development more affordable for Minnesota child care providers/early educators. A brief summary of each initiative is provided below.

Redesigning T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® MINNESOTA Scholarship program:

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® MINNESOTA provides critical funding for child care professionals pursuing higher education credits toward an associate's or bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development. As part of the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Great Workforce initiatives, the Minnesota Department of Human Services is leading a redesign of this higher education scholarship program to broaden opportunities to a larger audience of early childhood professionals and ensure that it more closely supports individuals working in programs that participate in Parent Aware.

Retaining the early care and education workforce through the REETAIN bonus program: This initiative is designed to offer incentives to keep well-trained professionals in the field and working with the same group of children over time. REETAIN bonuses are awarded every other year to qualified applicants who have a degree or CDA, have been in working in the field for a least a year, and are engaging in ongoing professional development.

Offering low-cost training to meet Parent Aware training indicators: Through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, funding was provided to subsidize the cost of foundational-level trainings taken in order to meet Parent Aware training indicators. All such trainings will be offered by Child Care Aware for no more than \$5 per training hour. This cost subsidy applies to classroom-based trainings but will also be made available through the Child Care Aware of Minnesota on-line training system, Eager to Learn. The target audiences for these subsidized trainings are licensed child care providers and Legal Non-Licensed Family, Friend and Neighbor providers.

Initiatives related to the Minnesota Professional Development Registry

The Professional Development Registry supports and tracks the professional development activities of Minnesota's Great Workforce. Five profiled initiatives involve the Registry:

- Increasing use of the Professional Development Registry among the workforce
- Upgrading the technology and functions of the Registry
- Operating the Registry more effectively
- Linking the Registry with STAR
- Providing online career guidance

All aim to make the Professional Development Registry more useful to the workforce. Below is a brief summary of each initiative.

Increasing use of the Professional Development Registry among the workforce:

All professionals working in the field of child care or early education are invited to become a member of the Registry by submitting documentation of their degrees, credentials, trainings, experience, and other professional contributions. The Registry then verifies their professional achievements and assigns each individual a step on the Career Lattice. This verified record of professional development is then made available to the individual via a printable learning record, which can be used to make a professional development plan. Child care and early education professionals can also use the Registry to search for MNCPD-approved training opportunities or to become a MNCPD-approved trainer. While these services are valuable, only a small percent of the workforce currently uses the Registry. As part of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, the Office of Early Learning has committed to encouraging participation by a larger portion of the workforce.

Upgrading the technology and functions of the Registry: The initiative will replace the current Professional Development Registry with a new and improved data system which will support and collect data on early care and education providers' professional development activities and educational experiences. In addition to maintaining the Registry's current functions, the upgraded data system will integrate professional development data with quality improvement data, Parent Aware ratings data, and case management data. This integrated system will allow early care and education providers and programs to take a more active role in planning and tracking their personal and organizational growth.

Operating the Registry more effectively: Continuous improvement specialists from the Minnesota Department of Human Services are working with staff from the Minnesota Center for Professional Development on the evaluation of processes related to the Professional Development Registry. The goal is to develop more efficient practices that will lead to improved customer service and decreased processing time. The Registry has three main functions: Trainer

approval, training approval, and processing early care and education provider learning records. The continuous improvement specialists plan to seek improvement in all three processes.

Linking the Registry with STAR: STAR is the data system at MDE that tracks information about professionals currently employed in a school district, including employment type, licensure status, highest level of education, and years of experience. STAR does not include information on the pre-service or in-service learning activities of these professionals. This initiative would link STAR data on early childhood education professionals working in Early Childhood Family Education, Early Childhood Special Education, and Pre-Kindergarten programs to the new data system described above that houses training and education information on early care and education providers working in early childhood education, child care, and school-age care.

Providing online career guidance: The Minnesota Center for Professional Development has contracted with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) to add new online career guidance tools in alignment with the Professional Development Registry. The goal is to develop web-based tools that will help early care and education providers to plan their education and training to meet their long-term career goals. CAEL's advising services help people discover what they want to do and will find rewarding but also what will lead to a career with a future. The new online career guidance features are intended to help early care and education provider to intentionally navigate and choose from the array of educational choices available via the Registry and via other parts of Minnesota's vast Professional Development system.

This information is available in accessible formats for individuals with disabilities by calling 651-431-3861 or by using your preferred relay service. For other information on disability rights and protections, contact the agency's ADA coordinator.



Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

Child **TRENDS**