

Minnesota's Great Workforce for Early Care and Education

2013 Annual Report



Minnesota Department of Human Services

Minnesota Department of
Education



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This report is made possible with a grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services using federal funding, CFDA 84.412A – Federal Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Grant.

Recommended Citation:

Minnesota Department of Human Services, (2014). *Minnesota’s Great Workforce for Early Care and Education, 2013 Annual Report*. (DHS Publication No. DHS-6313C-ENG 8-14). St. Paul, Minnesota: Minnesota State Government Printing Office.

Prepared By: 

"Increasing our commitment to early childhood education will be one key to closing the achievement gap and enabling all of our children to become successful adults. Let us all commit that by 2018, all three- and four-year-olds in Minnesota will have access to quality, affordable early childhood education."

Governor Mark Dayton, 2014 State of the State Address

Greetings!

The Office of Early Learning's 2013 Great Workforce Annual Report is the 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 who are part of Minnesota's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant along with useful information about our statewide professional development system. This inventory informs continued unified efforts to build and support Minnesota's Great Workforce.

Methods and expectations about care and education for young children have evolved greatly in the last 20 years. These changes are reflective of changes in our family structures and economics, our increasingly diverse population and, most of all, our rapidly exploding understanding of how – and when – the human brain develops. With the advent of Parent Aware, our statewide quality rating and improvement system, our rate of change has accelerated even further. The impact on the early learning field is the need for more intentional, well planned, versatile, collaborative and outcome-oriented services than ever

before. Ensuring that Minnesota's youngest learners are in high quality environments with highly skilled adults teaching and caring for them is critical to their growth and development and to our future success as a state.

Getting to these future goals requires agreement on what direction the program is headed, what road will be taken to get there, what to do along the way and what the timelines are for reaching our destination. Further, these goals cannot be accomplished working alone. This direction demands that we work together across sectors and agencies, with a solid foundational understanding of what each partner's role is and how we'll define and measure our progress together. Consider this inventory of professional development learning experiences an essential tool in planning our collective journey.

Melvin Carter
Director, Office of Early Learning, Minnesota
Department of Education

Erin Sullivan Sutton
Assistant Commissioner, Children and Family
Services Administration, Minnesota
Department of Human Services



Acknowledgements

This report was made possible through funding from the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant and by the many individuals who provided insights into their work to support Minnesota's early learning field. The Minnesota Departments of Education, Health and Human Services **thank the following for their time to participate in interviews for the content for this report:**

Sharon Bergen, Bobbie Burnham, Layna Cole, Michelle Dockter, Diane Etling, Rosemary Frazel, Vicki Hawley, Debbie Hewitt, Tabitha Isner, Lora Kussman, Ofelia Lopez, Carol Maliszewski, Kelly McKown, Ann McCully, Eileen Nelson, Barbara O'Sullivan, Scott Parker, Vicki Shofner, Kim Stone, Cory Woosley, Catherine Wright, Rozalyn Zuest

Additionally, thanks is extended to those who participated in planning meetings and exploratory sessions, as well as to many indirect contributors, who provided context and helped to build

consensus on the report content. As the work progresses, staff look forward to developing relationships and expanding the number of participants who provide input for future annual reports.

Recognition also goes to the many organizations and individuals who contributed to building the foundation that the work described in this report has been built. While this report highlights work supported by the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant and integrally related efforts, it also recognizes that Minnesota has a far-reaching network of organizations and partners that support the early learning field. Without their history of hard work and collaboration, the work described here would not have been possible.



About the Minnesota Department of Education

The Minnesota Department of Education works to advance educational achievement by supporting education programs, educators and support staff, setting clear standards and measuring indicators of performance. In February 2011, Governor Mark Dayton released a seven-point plan for Excellence in Education, which highlighted supporting early childhood learning as a key goal.

About the Minnesota Department of Health

The Minnesota Department of Health works under the mission of protecting, maintaining

and improving the health of all Minnesotans. It works with local health agencies, independent organizations and tribal governments to ensure healthy conditions within the state. About the Minnesota Department of Human Services The Minnesota Department of Human Services works to help people meet their basic needs, live with dignity and achieve their highest potential. Its focus is on the people served and on supporting partnerships with stakeholders working to achieve similar results.

Background and Purpose of this Report

Minnesota's Office of Early Learning and the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant

In the early learning field, it is common for quality of services to vary across settings. Providers come from a range of education levels and experiences. Over the past few years, Minnesota has been working on efforts to raise the professionalism of early care and education providers and to set higher standards for the training, professional development and education provided to them.

In August 2011, the Office of Early Learning was created as a joint effort among the Minnesota Departments of Education, Health and Human Services to address the need for greater coordination of programs for early learning services and professional development. The Office of Early Learning works to coordinate the governance and execution of programs and, ultimately, to improve the care, education and outcomes of children and families.

Four months after its creation, the Minnesota Department of Education was awarded \$45 million in funding from the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant from the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and

Human Services.¹ This grant was awarded to increase access to high-quality care and education programs for children who had high needs, and to further strengthen Office of Early Learning efforts.

Context and Purpose of the 2013 Annual Report

As part of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, the Office of Early Learning agreed to produce an annual report highlighting efforts and outcomes for workforce development funded through the grant. When defining the scope of this annual report, the decision was made to include efforts that may not be directly funded by the grant, but are closely tied to its workforce development goals. Beyond what is included in this report, conversations continue among stakeholders working to improve early childhood learning outcomes and kindergarten readiness across the state.

This report outlines key goals, strategies and progress that was made during the 2013 calendar year for a set of early childhood workforce development topic areas. In some cases, the report identifies specific responsible agencies, organizations, or funding sources. However, the majority of efforts are building on a foundation of work

¹ <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/2013-early-learning-challenge-flyer.pdf>

and relationships among multiple entities. In many cases, it would be cumbersome to identify all partners behind this effort and the role each played in 2013 progress. Therefore, this report focuses on efforts, goals and outcomes, rather than detailing those responsible for the work.

The Great Workforce for Early Learning

The early learning field has a range of career options, from providers of direct care in family child care homes and teachers in center- or school-based programs, to coaches, trainers, administrators, educators and mentors. The field is diverse and career opportunities continue to expand. The Office of Early Learning refers to the efforts described in this report as building and supporting a “Great Workforce” for those providing early learning supports to children and the personnel that support these early educators. The Great Workforce topic areas aim to move individual members of the workforce up the Career Lattice, and to support and recognize the increasing professionalization of the workforce.

The six topic areas of the Great Workforce include:

- Establishing a cross-sector set of Core Competencies for early educators
- Training and trainer development
- Credentials, certificates and diplomas

- The Minnesota Professional Development Registry
- Relationship-based Professional Development
- Financial supports for professional growth and retention.

The six topic areas included work on 32 separate initiatives in 2013.

Overview of the 2013 Annual Report

This report gives an overview of the purpose and goals for each of the six topic areas and the progress made during the 2013 calendar year. Appendix A includes a full list of all 32 initiatives under the six topic areas, with descriptions and reports on signs of progress towards achieving goals.

This report also documents the coordination among partner agencies, grantees, and other key stakeholders. It explores where coordination is strongest, where gaps exist, and informs recommendations for where to focus future work.

Methodology

To begin the process of creating this report, Office of Early Learning staff made a list of initiatives funded by or related to the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant and contact information of leaders for each initiative. Two data collection methods

informed this report: First, key state employees from the Minnesota Departments of Education, Health and Human Services participated in two work group sessions to create a shared history of the Great Workforce, to celebrate areas of collaboration and to identify opportunities for future work. Second, phone interviews were conducted with key contacts from each of the initiatives to outline the goals of each, describe progress from 2013, and report on indicators of progress. Interviewees included representatives from state agencies, institutes of higher education, nonprofit organizations, and other related stakeholders.

The interviews also uncovered the types of connections across initiatives. An analysis of these connections revealed that collaboration is strongest in cases where the work is required by statute, mandate or regulation, and in cases of contract agreements or where sustained funding streams supported collaboration. In cases without such incentives for collaboration, it may nonetheless occur when partners share common goals, trust and mutual goodwill. Connections were mapped by initiative and type. The map served as a tool in the second work group session to guide a discussion on gaps within the work.

An expanded description of the methodology for this report is in Appendix B.



Minnesota's Early Learning Workforce

Information on the size and make-up of Minnesota's early learning workforce is available from several sources. The Minnesota Department of Human Services has commissioned periodic statewide surveys to gather context on the provider workforce and how its makeup has changed over time.² The most recent Child Care Workforce Report, conducted in 2011, estimated that Minnesota's licensed family child care homes, licensed child care centers and license-exempt preschool programs include more than 31,000 workers. The Minnesota Department of Education tracks the number of active licensed staff in its data system for teacher licensure and employment (STAR). For the 2012-2013 school year, there were 6,013 licensed staff working in Early Childhood Special Education, School Readiness and Early Childhood Family Education.³ Additionally, Head Start employs more than 3,200 staff members.⁴ These three data sources estimate that the early learning workforce includes more than 40,000 members.

² <http://tinyurl.com/wilderchildcare>

³ Minnesota Office of Early Learning, Race to the Top – 2013 Early Learning Challenge Grant Annual Performance Report

⁴ 2012-2013 Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) PIR Summary Report – State Level, Minnesota, December 5, 2013

Table 1: Size of Minnesota's Early Learning Workforce

Setting	Number of staff
Child Care Programs	31,000
School-based Programs	6,013
Head Start Programs	3,200
Total	40,213

Child Care Programs

According to Wilder Research, members of the workforce are employed at approximately 10,800 licensed family child care providers and 1,000 center-based child care programs, with the majority (61 percent) of licensed family child care providers in greater Minnesota and the majority of child care centers (67 percent) in the seven-county Twin Cities metro region. These sites comprise approximately 14,000 providers and assistants in family and home-based child care settings and 13,300 employees in child care centers. The latter 13,300 include approximately 1,200 center directors, 7,000 teachers, 2,000 assistant teachers and 3,100 aides.

School-based Programs

According to the Minnesota Department of Education's license tracking system, in 2013 there were 6,013 teachers working in school-based early learning programs. These programs include 424 Early Childhood Special Education programs, 509 School Readiness-funded school-based pre-kindergarten sites (141 of which are also funded under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act), and an unknown number of additional school-based pre-kindergarten sites funded through alternative sources.

Head Start Programs

According to the 2012-2013 Head Start Program Information Report, Minnesota has 53 Head Start grantees (including 34 Head Starts, 18 Early Head Starts and one Migrant and Seasonal Head Start) housed in

33 Community Action Agencies, eight private/public nonprofits, one school system and 11 tribal governments or consortiums.

The 2011 Child Care Workforce Report does not include estimates of how many non-providers (which include trainers, coaches, mentors and educators) are practicing in Minnesota's early learning field, but it is important that these workers are supported to grow along with providers.

Given the demonstrated importance of early childhood education and growing research on early brain development, it is critical that early care and education practitioners have access to high-quality professional development. With such a large, diverse workforce, delivering high-quality professional development requires an equally broad and multi-faceted professional development system.

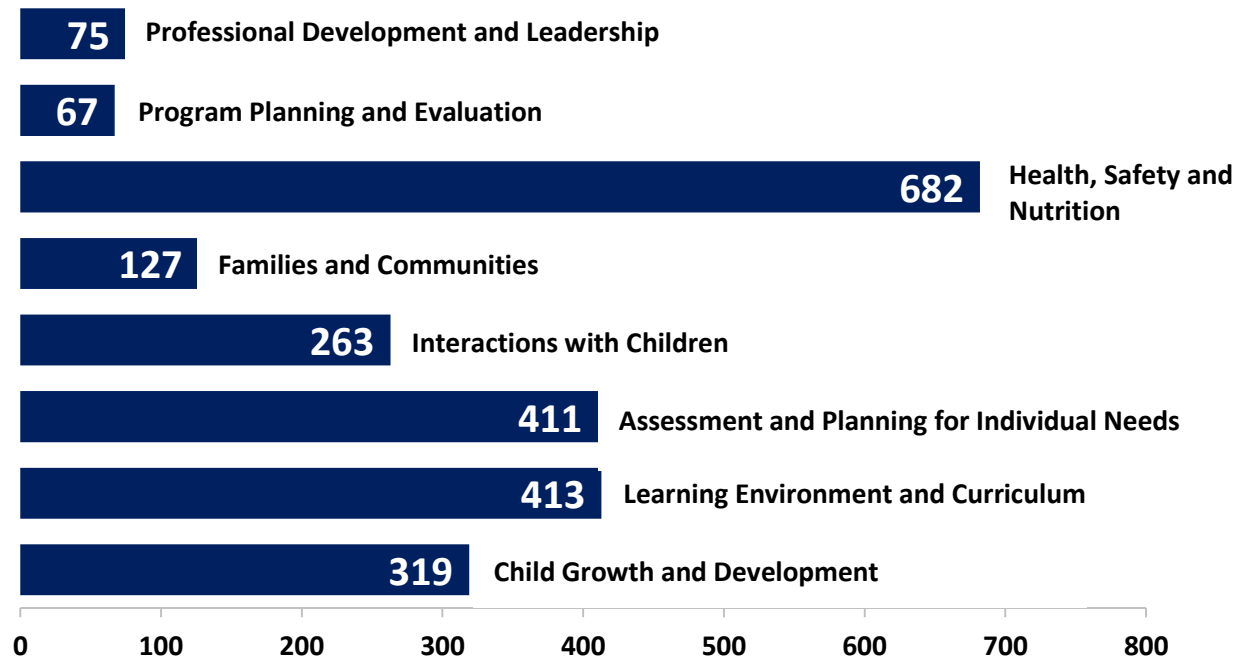
Overview of the Great Workforce Topic Areas

Minnesota, with federal and state funding, has historically supported efforts for improving the quality and development of the early learning workforce through individual and collaborative efforts of the Minnesota Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, institutes of higher education and

partners. The additional \$45 million in Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant money bolsters the state's goals of "increasing early childhood program quality and accountability, building a skilled early childhood workforce, increasing access to quality early childhood programs for children with high needs and aligning state infrastructure around those goals."⁵ It focuses on serving children and improving outcomes for school readiness.

Figure1: Child Care Aware Trainings Offered in 2013 by Core Competency

In 2013, Child Care Aware sponsored and co-sponsored more than 2,300 training events. These events included online, series and single-event trainings for individuals working in child care and other early childhood settings. Although this is not a comprehensive listing of all trainings, Child Care Aware is currently the largest training provider in the state. Future versions of this report will include non-Child Care Aware sponsored trainings through the enhanced Registry.



⁵<http://www.education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/EarlyLearn/index.html>.

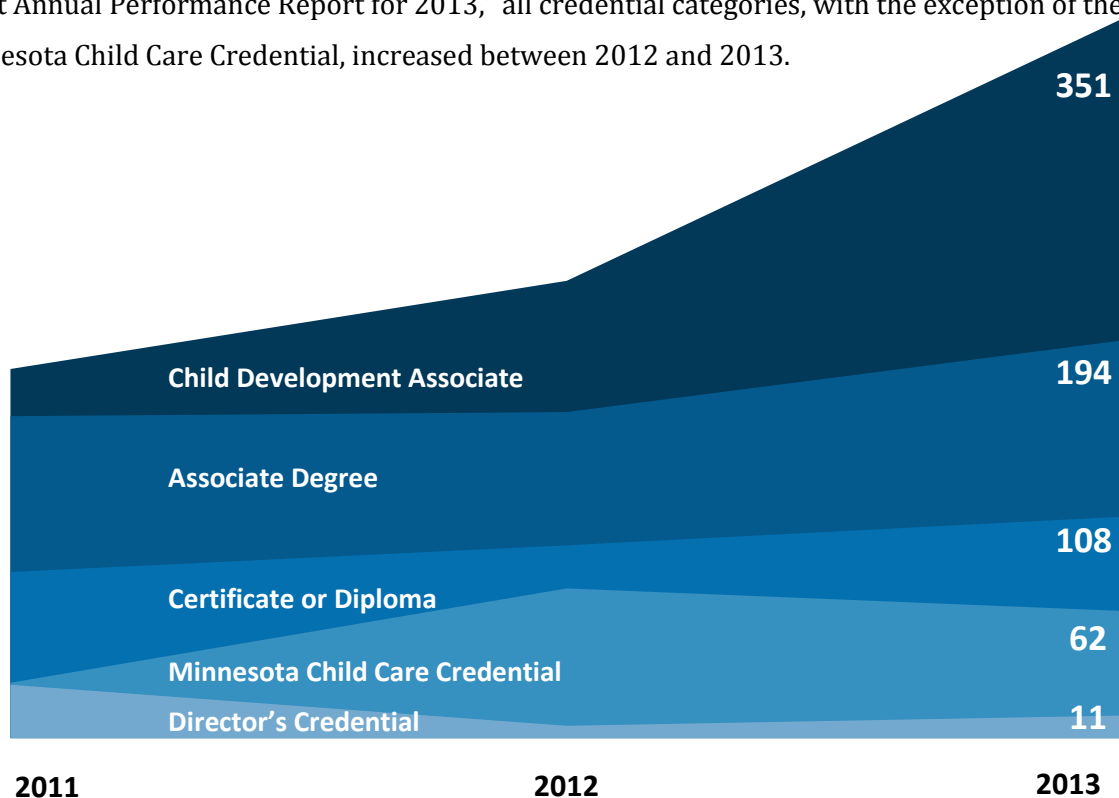
The state uses a set of core competencies for early childhood education and care practitioners that define the knowledge and skills to support child outcomes and development, based on current research. These competencies are the basis for training and professional development in the child care field. Figure 1 lists a breakdown of the number of trainings offered by Child Care Aware in 2013. Minnesota also has Board of Teaching Standards, which are separate guidelines for early childhood teachers

seeking licensure. Notably, neither set of standards include professionals working in early childhood special education.

The initiatives related to **Core Competencies Framework Alignment** seek to develop a consistent set of aptitudes for early educators that closely aligns with the Board of Teaching standards. These initiatives also include work to enable smooth transitions between sectors and institutes of higher education for degree-seeking professionals.

Figure 2: Number of Early Childhood Credentials Awarded, 2011-13

According to the Minnesota Office of Early Learning “Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant Annual Performance Report for 2013,” all credential categories, with the exception of the Minnesota Child Care Credential, increased between 2012 and 2013.



Relatedly, the **Training and Trainer Development** topic area serves to improve the skills of trainers to enhance training outcomes. These efforts are working to expand the pool of quality trainings and trainers, make trainings more available, and build upon the trainer approval process established in 2008. After Core Competency Framework Alignment efforts are completed, trainings of trainers on the updated competencies will begin in 2015.

Just as work is being done to formally approve trainers and training content, efforts in the **Credentials, Certificates and Diplomas** topic areas are aimed at recognizing the quality of early educators and practitioners who completed educational programs. These efforts aim to assist practitioners in completing programs and expand opportunities to recognize professional advancement. As shown in Figure 2 on the previous page, the number of credentials, certificates and diplomas awarded has increased between 2012 and 2013, with the exception of the Minnesota Child Care credential, which underwent revisions in 2013.⁶

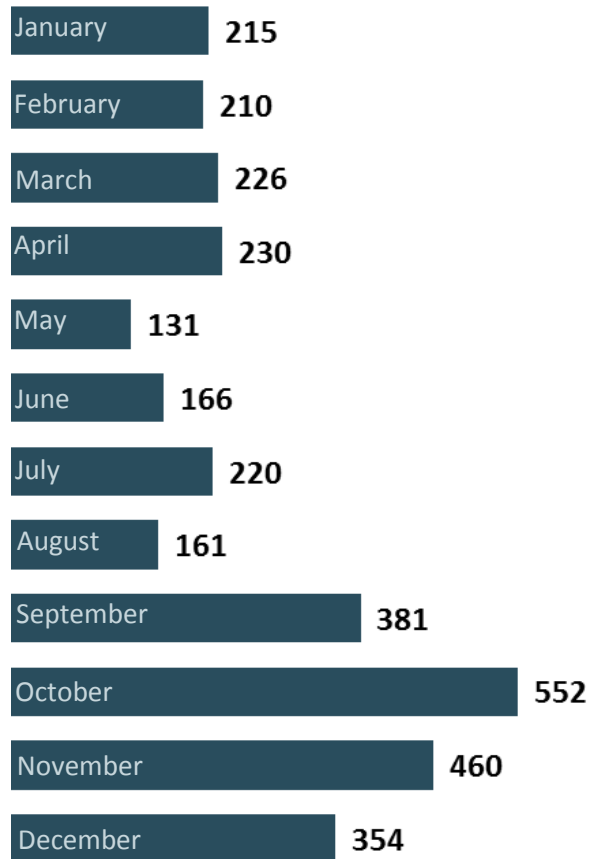
When providers and educators go through professional development, they can indicate their progress on the **Minnesota Professional Development Registry**. The Registry provides participants with a Learning Record, information

about the trainings they attended, and assigns them a level on the Career Lattice. Efforts under the Minnesota Professional Development Registry topic area aim to make the system more user-friendly, engage more professionals in the Registry, and offer personalized career guidance. Related professional development advising services are also part of the Child Care Aware system and are included in the Parent Aware rating process.

As shown in Figure 3 on the next page, the Registry continued to grow and enrolled more than 3,300 new members by the end of 2013. A sharp increase in the monthly numbers during the last third of the year is largely due to technology upgrades and increased emphasis on Registry participation as part of the Parent Aware rating process.

⁶ Minnesota Office of Early Learning, Race to the Top –2013 Early Learning Challenge Grant Annual Performance Report

Figure 3: Number of Registry Applications Each Month, 2013



The Registry is currently implementing the capacity to recognize **Relationship-based Professional Development**, which includes coaching, consultation, or mentoring by recognizing approved specialist positions and learning content for practitioners, trainers and other professionals in the Registry's records. Efforts in the Relationship-based Professional Development topic area aim to provide tailored support and development opportunities to early educators in a variety of ways. Some efforts focus on developing specific skill areas

Relationship-based Professional Development and MNAEYC Accreditation Facilitation Consultation: Andrea's Story

Andrea was working at a child care center in the Twin Cities when she learned about the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children (MNAEYC) Accreditation Facilitation Program at a Minnesota Child Care Association conference. "We had talked about getting [our center] accredited; at that point, it was sort of a buzzword and people were asking about it." She explained that the process was too complex for her program to navigate by itself and how having an Accreditation Facilitation consultant made the process less daunting. "Looking back, I don't know how we would have done it without that help; it's so much paperwork. Having someone to help us navigate that was completely invaluable. They talked about what specifically was needed to get accredited, how we should document those things and what to include in our portfolios... It was invaluable to have a direct line to someone who could explain the specifics." Furthermore, the project has had a positive impact on the children that she serves. "Becoming accredited has definitely made us more intentional about what we do. It was a renewal to our commitment to provide quality care; we put so much time and effort into getting this stamp of approval that now it's something we think about every day, when we are working with children and families, or lesson planning."

related to the Core Competencies, while others help guide the development of early learning programs and educators.

In conjunction with the work to provide professional development opportunities for early educators, efforts to offset the financial burden of training and education are

essential to ensuring that the workforce can access opportunities and keep highly trained individuals in the field. Efforts in the

Scholarships and Financial Supports topic area aim to make professional development and education more affordable, and to incentivize longevity in the field for exceptional practitioners.

2013 Accomplishments

This section provides an overview of the progress made in each of the six Great Workforce topic areas during the 2013 calendar year. Information for this section came from interviews with key informants for each of the initiatives within the topic areas. For more details on each of the initiatives, refer to Appendix A.

Core Competencies Framework Alignment Efforts

Minnesota has multiple sets of expectations for the skills and knowledge an early educator should demonstrate, including the Minnesota Core Competencies for Early Childhood Education and Care Practitioners and the Minnesota Board of Teaching Standards. In 2013, two initiatives worked towards establishing a single set of competencies for educators and creating a clear path for educational advancement.

The 2013 initiatives for Core Competencies Framework Alignment efforts are: Aligning Board of Teaching Standards with the Core Competency Framework; and Establishing Articulation Agreements within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system. The highlights of this work from 2013 are:

- A Core Competency Advisory Group was established to set a vision for the knowledge and competency framework and to begin writing revised competencies.
- Two- and four-year early childhood programs at institutes of higher education met to discuss approaches for establishing articulation agreements.
- MnSCU held a forum for representatives in the early childhood field to bring more stakeholders into the articulation agreement process.

Training and Trainer Development

In 2013, six initiatives contributed to training and trainer development, including expanding the variety and quality of trainings and trainers available to early learning programs. From the “2011 Child Care Workforce Report,” 57 percent of the child care workforce was interested in going through an in-depth training series for professional development. However, two-thirds of the family child care providers and 71 percent of those working in center-based programs had challenges finding convenient professional development opportunities. The expansion of quality trainings and trainers helps to make opportunities more accessible to practitioners across the state.

In 2013, the Training and Trainer Development initiatives included: Enhancements to Eager to Learn; Developing Content for Foundational and Advanced Trainings for Delivery through the Child Care Aware System; Centers of Excellence for Young Children with Disabilities; Aligning the Professional Development System with Tribal Needs; and Bilingual and Bicultural Trainer Learning Community. Some of the key accomplishments in 2013 for this work were:

- About 2,393 educators, trainers and other early learning program staff members

Trainer Development and the Bilingual and Bicultural Trainer Learning Community: Mohamed’s Story

Mohamed is a Somali native who received a scholarship to go through Think Small’s program to become a trainer in a cohort of bilingual and bicultural participants. He says that he especially appreciated the collaborative nature of the cohort model and the chance to learn from other current and new trainers. “The group setting really gave the content value. In a sense, you can read about concepts from a book, but to have that discussion, to hear about other people’s experiences, ask questions and learn from each other... created a lot of ‘ah-ha moments’ where people could relate from having similar experiences.”

After completing the cohort, Mohamed was able to begin work almost immediately, serving as a valuable resource to his community by providing trainings in Somali. “Right off the bat I had the opportunity to work with Somali child care providers interested in a Star Rating through Parent Aware. They couldn’t get their ratings without going through the trainings, but the trainings had only been available in English in the area... It was very fulfilling to see the people responding to and connecting with the trainings and that they are comfortable and relating to what I was saying.” Mohamed has continued to offer training to child care providers.

participated in coursework in Eager to Learn (Child Care Aware of Minnesota's community-based e-learning program)

- Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant funds were used to make the Eager to Learn platform more user-friendly
- A Spanish-speaking learning community completed the Minnesota Child Care Credential through Eager to Learn
- Fifty-four hours of Parent Aware foundational trainings were completed and made available to providers interested in a Parent Aware Star Rating
- Early Childhood Special Education's INSPIRE ACTION self-assessment was piloted by 18 districts selected to be representative of programs statewide
- Eleven tribes and one metro American Indian community committed to creating local professional development advisory committees for early learning programs
- Nine bicultural and bilingual trainers became approved trainers
- Technology upgrades improved the training and trainer approval process on the Minnesota Professional Development Registry.⁷

Credentials, Certificates and Diplomas

⁷ The Registry is now called Develop, and is available at www.DevelopToolMN.org

Five initiatives in 2013 related to credentials, certificates and diplomas worked to increase the number of practitioners who completed educational programs by either reducing barriers or offering education directly. While all licensed early childhood teachers must have at least a bachelor's degree, educational credentials vary widely for others working in early childhood settings. New Head Start standards released in 2008 required that, by September 2013, at least half of all Head Start teachers have a bachelor's degree or higher. This goal was exceeded, with 66 percent of Head Start teachers obtaining a bachelor's degree,⁸ despite such degrees being less common among the workforce in child care programs. According to the "2011 Child Care Workforce Report," an estimated 23 percent of child care workers held a bachelor's degree related to early childhood education or development. In addition, 14 percent of child care center teachers and 7 percent of preschool teachers held a Child Development Associate credential.

The 2013 credentials, certificates and diplomas initiatives included: Child Development Associate Credential; Director's Credential; Minnesota Child Care Credential; Infant/Toddler Credential; and Credit for

⁸ 2012-2013 Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) PIR Summary Report – State Level, Minnesota, December 5, 2013

prior Learning. From the 2013 work, highlights include:

- Sixty-two Minnesota Child Care Credentials and 351 National Child Development Associate Credentials were awarded
- Eleven Director's Credentials were awarded and a new cohort began with 17 participants
- Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant funds were used to reduce barriers to participating in the Minnesota Child Care Credential program
- Those seeking the Child Development Associate Credential received 145 assessment fee scholarships, 52 training scholarships and one renewal fee reimbursement.

Minnesota Professional Development Registry

The Minnesota Professional Development Registry, which is being rebranded in 2014 as “Develop,” is an online database that tracks professional development efforts of early childhood and school age educators. The Registry includes education and trainings that practitioners completed and links to available development opportunities. After members of the Registry submit information about their degrees, credentials, previous trainings and experiences, staff at the Minnesota Center for Professional Development verifies these

accomplishments and assigns practitioners a step on the Career Lattice.

Four initiatives related to the Registry were in place in 2013, including: Technology upgrade and integration of Registry with quality improvement efforts; enhancing the Registry with employment data; Individual Training Needs Assessment; and virtual career guidance. Progress from 2013 includes:

- The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant helped fund the launch of a more user-friendly professional development Registry, renamed “Develop,” that supports alignment with Parent Aware, more thorough data collection and more transparency for users⁹
- The groundwork was laid to make the Individual Training Needs Assessment available online, and link to online career guidance services
- Content was developed for the online career guidance website.

Relationship-based Professional Development

Relationship-based Professional Development is the collective term for activities related to coaching, consultation or mentoring to early learning program providers or practitioners. This topic area

⁹ Develop is available at www.DevelopToolMN.org

included 12 initiatives in 2013. According to the “2011 Child Care Workforce Report,” 15 percent of licensed early educators, 19 percent of child care center teachers, 47 percent of licensed or legally unlicensed preschool teachers (not including school-based or Head Start programs), and 23 percent of child care center directors reported participating in some form of Relationship-based Professional Development that year.

The 2013 Relationship-based Professional Development initiatives included: Child Care Aware professional development advising; Minnesota Reading Corps; child care health consultants; consultation for those serving children with special needs; Parent Aware Quality Coaching; early childhood mental health supports; the Center for Coaching and Mentoring at Mankato State; CLASS coaching; Professional development facilitators working through the Centers of Excellence; Minnesota Licensed Family Child Care Association mentors; MNAEYC Accreditation Facilitation Project consultants; and standards for approving and recognizing Relationship-based Professional Development. Highlights from 2013 include:

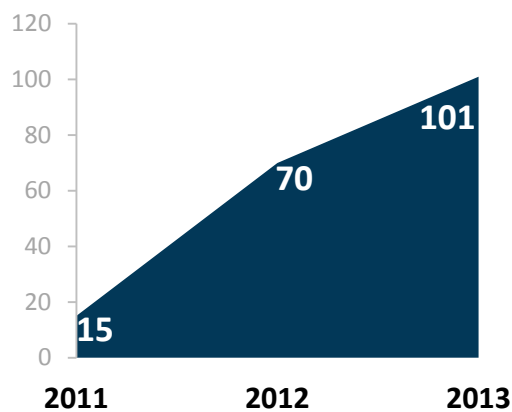
- Twenty-five initial assessments and five accreditations were funded through the Minnesota Licensed Family Child Care Association mentor program

- Fourteen programs and 10 new master cadre members received training and support to implement the Pyramid Model developed by the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention
- Approximately 1,414 consultation visits, for a total of 3,660 hours, were provided through the MNAEYC Accreditation Facilitation Project
- Nine family child care providers from the Northside Achievement Zone and St. Paul Promise Neighborhood were enrolled in the Minnesota Reading Corps program
- Thirteen professionals completed training to become Child Care Health Consultants in the Race to the Top Transformation Zones
- The Parent Aware Implementation Guide for Quality Coaches was updated based on feedback from coaches
- Twenty-four mentors and 48 mentees completed the Early Childhood Mentoring and Coaching Community of Practice through the Center for Coaching and Mentoring at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

As shown in Figure 4, the number of child care centers reaching candidacy for accreditation with the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children (MNAEYC)

increased since the awarding of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge in 2011.

Figure 4: Child Care Centers Reaching Candidacy for Accreditation, 2011-13



Scholarships and Financial Supports

In 2013, three initiatives provided financial supports for early learning program providers to make professional development more affordable. Financial supports and scholarships helped reduce barriers for accessing professional development and incentivize providers to pursue opportunities.

The Scholarships and Financial Supports topic area also provided financial incentives to encourage highly trained individuals to

remain in the field and create consistency in providers for children. According to the “2011 Child Care Workforce Report,” the turnover rate of child care workers (not including Head Start or school-based early childhood programs) was 11 percent, which is down from 12 percent in 2010 and 16 percent in 2005.

Initiatives with these overall goals included: TEACH Early Childhood® Minnesota; Minnesota Child Care Credential Supports; and Retaining Early Educators Through Attaining Incentives Now (REETAIN). Throughout 2013, highlights include:

- Approximately \$420,000 in TEACH scholarships for education professionals seeking associate’s or bachelor’s degrees in early learning programs
- Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant funding subsidized 75 percent of the cost for the Minnesota Child Care Credential program for practitioners
- Eighty-nine REETAIN bonuses, totaling nearly \$200,000, were awarded.

Connecting the Great Workforce Topic Areas and Initiatives

The six topic areas of Minnesota's Great Workforce have worked to advance the field from a variety of angles, as described above. The work has involved many partners who provide opportunities to current and potential practitioners and help meet professional development needs at all levels. Due to the number of initiatives and involved parties, it is especially important that there is collaboration across the Great Workforce partners to ensure that gaps and challenges are addressed, resources are shared where appropriate and efficient, and duplicated efforts are avoided.

Across the 32 initiatives that make up this report, several levels of interconnectedness and coordination have emerged. At the strongest level, goals of initiatives are interdependent on one another, common among initiatives within the same topic area. However, interdependencies have also developed between initiatives in different topic areas. As an example, while

Relationship-based Professional Development recognition standards are defined, upgrades to the current Registry system need to be completed before this category of professional development can be included within the Registry. The interconnected nature of this work and the requirements of direct collaboration make this a strong connection among initiatives.

The next level of connection among initiatives is a professional-level connection in which initiatives are intimately related, but do not depend on each other to accomplish their respective goals. An example of this connection is between the initiative that is supporting the bilingual and bicultural trainer learning community and the technology upgrades that are being made to the Registry. In this case, bicultural and bilingual trainers will be designated as such on the Registry when technology upgrades are complete, which will strengthen both initiatives, but each effort can achieve its goals independently, as well.

The Scholarships and Financial Supports Topic Area and T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Minnesota: Stacy's Story

After graduating from high school, Stacy worked in a family child care home for seven years when she learned about the T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® Scholarship. She stated that this was the push she needed to get her associate's degree in child development. After completing the two-year program, she decided to reapply to T.E.A.C.H. to pursue her bachelor's degree, again in child development, and eventually went on to pursue her master's degree. "As I went through, every degree kind of built upon more indicators of school readiness, follow through with the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress, doing web-[based lesson] planning for the age groups that I was providing care for. I have been able to create a strong, school-readiness program that aligns with the Minnesota State Standards. I am confident that my children are ready for school before kindergarten." Stacy says that T.E.A.C.H. is what gave her the initial push that she needed to pursue her first degree, which built the momentum that she needed to go on and eventually achieve her master's degree.

Connections exist among initiatives where people involved are aware of what is going on with the other initiatives through attending the same meetings and trainings, rather than professional necessity. An example of this emerged when the key contact for Parent Aware Quality Coaching said that she was aware and up-to-speed on the effort to develop content for foundational and advanced trainings, but that she was not involved directly or having her work influenced by it. In other cases, due to the requirements of a person's professional position, they may be required to do work on two initiatives that are not directly related or dependent on one another.

Exploring these connections and their various levels has indicated that there is collaboration and communication occurring across topic areas and initiatives, as well as among agencies, organizations and others doing the work. These connections and communication channels continue to evolve as efforts advance through stages of work. Categorizing the connections is not an exact science, but the exercise of discussing links illustrates the interconnectedness of the work.

Challenges facing the Development of the Great Workforce

While efforts to build and support a Great Workforce evolved over time, there are still persistent challenges limiting the growth and professionalization of the field. Specifically, from the work group discussions that informed this report, while opportunities for professional development and related activities are increasing and expanding across the state, there continue to be limitations in the uptake by practitioners and potential future practitioners.

There are a series of persistent barriers, especially in the child care field, limiting practitioners' participation in professional development at a variety of levels. As a first example, early learning professions often offer low compensation. Professional development does not always increase pay due to the market-driven nature of the service fees. Providers may be unable to charge higher rates for their services after going through professional development or risk moving beyond what their clients can afford, ultimately, losing customers. This lack of a guaranteed payoff, combined with the upfront cost to participate in trainings and professional development opportunities, can greatly limit participation.

Similarly, the time required to participate in professional development can limit providers' participation. According to the "2011 Child Care Workforce Report," 66 percent of family early educators and 71 percent of center-based programs reported challenges finding convenient professional development opportunities. As an example, family child care facilities are small businesses that usually have only a handful of employees. This makes it difficult to take time off to attend trainings or meet with mentors without potentially requiring the families that rely on their services to find back-up plans, take time off of work themselves to care for their children, or search for more stable sources of care.

Another reality of the child care field is that it is not uncommon for practitioners to see the job as a temporary placement, rather than a career. For some early educators, caring for children can be a way to make ends meet while caring for their own children. Early learning programs are also not a career pathway that high school guidance counselors or college advisors advertise strongly, in part because of the traditionally low compensation levels and the perception that it is not a permanent career option. Because of this, the drive to go through professional development can be, at times, lower in comparison with someone with long-term plans to remain in the field.

Recommendations: Opportunities and Direction for Future Work

The following recommendations are from insights shared by interviewees and participants in the work group sessions. These recommendations address areas commonly cited as presenting opportunities for improvement with strategies that can be acted upon. While the recommendations provide general guidance for the direction of future work, they rely heavily on the stakeholders invested in the outcomes for execution.

Plan for sustainability after Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant funding

While the \$45 million Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant has been a great asset to supporting the development of Minnesota's early learning workforce, the grant cycle finishes at the end of 2015. The grant funded a number of initiatives that will achieve their goals and end, but for the continuous systems that it has helped to fund, a planning and prioritization process needs to begin prior to the grant's end. This process must include measurable outcomes to demonstrate "what works," and a search for funding to sustain priority programs after the

grant cycle ends. There is also potential to capitalize on the relationships that were built through grant-funded projects by leveraging them with newly developed infrastructure and goodwill to achieve future goals.

Infuse culturally competent material and context into bilingual trainers' facilitation materials

Access to trainings and training materials continues to be a challenge, especially for Minnesota's immigrant populations. While recent efforts to increase the number of bilingual and bicultural trainers across the state have helped to reduce this barrier, training curricula need to be adapted into home languages with cultural understandings infused throughout in order to be truly accessible. Bilingual trainers working with materials in English have to overextend their time and energy to interpret and contextualize materials, thus reducing the efficacy and constricting accessibility of trainings.

Improve the recruitment and retention of professionals in the workforce

It is widely understood that stable relationships with early child educators and low staff turnover rates have a positive impact on child

development.¹⁰ Therefore, an important focus for future work is to attract and keep qualified professionals in the field. To do this, state agencies can promote supports that are currently available to build stability in the great workforce, such as the T.E.A.C.H. scholarships or Relationship-based Professional Development, which establishes long-term rapport.

State agency staff can make efforts to connect with a broader network of potential employees. Currently, high school guidance counselors and college advisors provide minimal emphasis on early care and education as a career path. The Office of Early Learning can work with career counselors to promote the variety of career pathways available, and the training and education required for each. Recruit marketing experts to support communication about careers in the early learning field and the Minnesota Center for Professional Development virtual career guidance website, which explains career pathways and the supports available for achieving goals.

¹⁰ Ahnert, L., Pinquart, M. & Lamb, M.E. (2006). Security of children's relationships with nonparental care providers: A meta-analysis. *Child development*, 77, 664-679. See also Whitebook, M. & Sakai, L. (2003). Turnover begets turnover: An examination of job and occupational instability among child care center staff. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 18, 273.

Strengthen coordination among the Office of Early Learning and institutes of higher education

Currently, the Office of Early Learning and institutes of higher education work on parallel efforts towards the common goal of connecting current and potential early learning program professionals with the training and education needed to be successful. Because there are few direct lines of funding or contracted work between the two, efforts remain in silos. Ultimately, the early learning field would benefit by reducing overlapping or duplicate efforts. Practitioners would benefit by having a smooth transition between non-credit trainings and for-credit programs at colleges; and the growth of practitioners with degrees will increase the professionalization of the field.

Strategically collect workforce demographic data

Considering all of the various work areas that are covered under the efforts from the Office of Early Learning, a strong opportunity exists to collect and analyze data about Minnesota's early learning workforce and the impact of the work being done. On-going data collected about the workforce can give a snapshot of who makes up the workforce and benefits future planning by identifying training needs, knowing who has access to trainings, better marketing of professional development

opportunities, and making informed decisions about the allocation of resources.

Create a “one stop shop” for professional development opportunities

While the increase in available professional development and variety of available career paths has expanded learning opportunities, it has also contributed to confusion given the many groups working to increase professionalization. Often, people are not aware of all of the opportunities available to them, as there is no single resource for exploring these options.

In the same way that the creation of the Office of Early Learning has benefitted state agencies by offering a collaborative environment for early childhood efforts, practitioners would benefit from the creation of a single, comprehensive venue for information about trainings and career possibilities. Efforts to achieve this goal are already underway and include additional technical improvements to the Registry, the development of a virtual career guidance tool with an Individual Training Needs Assessment, and new features that will make collaboration among sectors easier.

The development of this central platform for training and professional development opportunities benefits both people in the field and those offering the opportunities.

Practitioners can access resources to advance in their current careers, or obtain information about what other opportunities are available.

Training organizations and institutes of higher education benefit from the increased interest in their programs. A compilation of available opportunities also helps facilitate communication within the system and gives a clearer picture of who is doing what, which leads to stronger communication among systems. This helps to facilitate sharing of information and referrals to professional development opportunities. It will be important to continue development of this platform and include training and service providers in the process moving forward. Once the platform is completed and launched, a key step is to promote it to a variety of audiences, including those already in the field at all levels and potential future members.

Appendix A: Initiative Descriptions and Progress from 2013

Initiatives Related to Training and Trainer Development

In 2013, six initiatives contributed to working towards training and trainer development. These initiatives worked towards the goals of expanding the variety and improving the quality of trainings and trainers available to early educators in the state. These initiatives included:

- Enhancements to Eager to Learn
- Developing content for foundational and advanced trainings for delivery through the Child Care Aware system
- Centers of Excellence related to early childhood special education
- Aligning the Professional Development System with tribal needs
- Bilingual and bicultural trainer learning community
- Trainer and training approval and support.

Enhancements to Eager to Learn

Key Goals

Offer a more advanced level of community-based learning through online learning communities.

Facilitate successful completion of the Minnesota Child Care Credential, MnAEYC Director's Credential and the Child Development Associate Credential.

Child Care Aware of Minnesota offers a community-based, e-learning program for caretakers of children from birth to 12, called Eager to Learn. Research supporting the online learning model informs course structure, which brings people together through technology. Early educators take courses individually and the larger programs (which include the Child Development Associate Credential, the Minnesota Child Care Credential, the Directors Credential, and Spanish-language courses) group course attendees into learning communities.

2013 Progress

After a 38 percent increase in students enrolled in Eager to Learn between 2011 and 2012, the number of participants grew to 2,393 in 2013. Students included early learning professionals, trainers and



Almost 2,400 educators, trainers and other early care and education staff members participated in Eager to Learn coursework.

other staff members. Part of this growth came from the addition of online versions of Parent Aware-related courses in January 2013; Parent Aware-related courses are series-based and delivered in classrooms on a face-to-face basis. However, when students have to miss a class, they are now able to make up the missed curriculum using the online version. This new option assisted students in meeting Parent Aware training indicators and introduced students to the online classes.

In 2013, the learning communities grew to include the Minnesota Child Care Credential and one Spanish-speaking learning community. Two learning communities earned the National Child Development Associate credential and one earned the Director's Credential. Generally, communities included 15 students who completed the work over 10 to 12 months. Although attrition from learning communities has been a concern, Eager to Learn saw higher completion rates in 2013. Classrooms on Eager to Learn facilitated chats, group work, collective portfolio work and built peer support.

The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant funded an upgrade to the learning platform, which made the online interface more user-friendly. Because of this technology support, staff are now able to work more efficiently, and the platform is more accessible and updated for providers.

Developing Content for Foundational and Advanced Trainings for Delivery through Child Care Aware

Key Goals:

Develop Parent Aware trainings that are comprehensive and inclusive for all participants.

Incorporate practice and reflection into the structure of Parent Aware trainings.

Facilitate positive child outcomes related to school readiness through training high-quality early educators.

With the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, the Minnesota Department of Human Services contracted with the University of Minnesota Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) to translate and adapt the 54 hours of existing Parent Aware foundational training requirements into Spanish, Somali and Hmong. The contract also instructs CEED to develop 108 new hours of advanced trainings and translate these trainings into the three languages. With the exception of a two-hour training on the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress, all trainings will be series-based with a model that divides the time into content learning, reflection and new skill practice.

2013 Progress

In 2013, 54 hours of foundational trainings were finalized and released statewide in English. A course evaluation gathered feedback about the material, the speed of delivery, and content of the trainings. Adjustments based on feedback are expected for 2014. Additionally, efforts to adapt and translate the foundational trainings into Spanish, Somali and Hmong began in November 2013, expected to be completed in summer 2014. Work on the 108 hours of advanced training (Level Three of the revised Core Competencies) will begin when the revised Core Competencies are released.



Fifty-four hours of foundational trainings were released and are now available to child care providers seeking a Parent Aware Star Rating in Minnesota.

Centers of Excellence for Young Children with Disabilities

Key Goals:

Build and support skills necessary for professionals who serve young children with disabilities.

Positively impact the development of children with special needs, and provide meaningful support to children and their families.

The Centers of Excellence provides professional development opportunities for improved outcomes for children with disabilities from birth to age 5 in three broad topic areas:

- Technical Assistance Centers on social and emotional intervention
- Family-guided routine-based interventions, and
- Classroom Engagement Model.

Specific content within each is constantly in development and includes content regarding culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. Selected trainers receive professional development from national experts and pass that expertise on to early care and education providers who work with children with disabilities.

2013 Progress

Efforts in 2013 continued to build relationships with national experts on family-guided routine-based interventions. Content with cultural and



By the end of 2013, 18 school districts were using the INSPIRE ACTION self-assessment tool.

linguistic diversity was imbedded in all of the innovations supported through the Centers of Excellence. A program self-assessment tool, called INSPIRE ACTION, was designed to be used by leadership in their local education agencies to assess strengths and opportunities for Early Childhood Special Education programs. By the end of 2013, the INSPIRE ACTION tool was in the trial phase, with 18 districts using it. In December 2013, Minnesota's Early Childhood Special Education Unit was awarded a technical assistance grant from the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center.

Aligning the Professional Development System with Tribal Needs

Key Goal

Ensure that the professional development system recognizes tribal sovereignty and tribal culture.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services funds the Minnesota Tribal Resources for Early Childhood Care for two primary tasks, to:

1. Provide child care resources and referral services to tribal communities in Minnesota
2. Serve as a liaison among tribal communities and other key partners in the early learning field.

In its role as a liaison, Minnesota Tribal Resources for Early Childhood Care (MNTRECC) is leading a process to identify the professional development needs and priorities of tribes, and to document changes to make the Minnesota Center for Professional Development and the Registry more accommodating to those needs.

2013 Progress

The stakeholder engagement process began in 2013, with 11 tribes and one metro American Indian community committing to work toward a common professional development system. First,

MNTRECC gathered individuals from five tribes and metro American Indian communities to discuss the issues and potential solutions. This group decided that tribes would establish their own local advisory committees to approve courses and trainers and to develop culturally specific training. Approval criteria can and will vary from tribe to tribe, as it is the local elders that hold expertise and bestow legitimacy. Each committee has a representative on the MNTRECC planning committee, which meets quarterly to set the agenda for their shared work.

Also in 2013, MNTRECC clarified what changes should be made to the Professional Development Registry to support this new process and honor tribal definitions of professionalism. This update to the Registry is scheduled for 2014.



Eleven Tribes and one metro American Indian community have committed to creating local advisory committees for early child care and education.

Bilingual and Bicultural Trainer Learning Community

Key Goal

Increase the number of bicultural and bilingual trainers across the state.

The Office of Early Learning has committed to increasing the number of bilingual and bicultural trainers across the state to provide all early educators with high-quality professional development opportunities. Think Small is working to recruit and support bilingual and bicultural trainers to provide Parent Aware trainings in languages other than English. Child Care Aware of Minnesota is supporting this effort by offering Training of Trainers and online learning communities for newly recruited trainers.

2013 Progress

Think Small conducted a baseline count of current bilingual and bicultural trainers and found six Hmong, four Oromo, 10 Somali and 10 Spanish-speaking trainers. The Minnesota Department of Human Services established the goal of a 20 percent increase in trainers per linguistic community by the end of 2013, and an additional 20 percent increase per linguistic community by December 2014.



Nine bicultural and bilingual trainers completed trainings in 2013, exceeding the 2013 goal.

In 2013, Think Small recruited nine bilingual and bicultural trainers to participate in the first learning community, which began in fall 2013. Recruitment efforts included collaborating with the Child Care Aware professional development advisors and connecting with key community leaders to help navigate local networks and identify potential participants. Recruitment efforts were so successful that participants signed up for a second cohort, which began training in early 2014.

Trainer and Training Approval and Support

Key Goal

Ensure that all trainers and trainings offered to early learning professionals in the state are of high quality.

The Minnesota Center for Professional Development offers an approval process for trainers and training content to ensure quality. Individuals who wish to be approved as trainers submit coursework, training records (including training on best practices in adult learning), employment history and letters of reference. Experts review applicant materials and award a trainer type/level in the Registry. For training materials to gain approval, the sponsoring organization must submit a description of the course content, learning objectives, and how the trainings apply to Minnesota's Core Competencies. The Registry tracks training events for approved courses.

2013 Progress

Work in 2013 included efforts to align the approval of trainers and trainings with the Registry. The system is now more user-friendly and streamlined. Where professional trainers and practitioners used to have two separate profiles and go through two application processes, the



Recent technology upgrades have made the trainer and training approval process on the Minnesota Center for Professional Development Registry more user-friendly.

Registry now links the two profiles. Practitioners fill out one application and have one profile that contains their Learning Record, Career Lattice step, and Trainer status.

Coordinated work between the Minnesota Center for Professional Development and the Minnesota Department of Human Services began to:

- Define the Minnesota Center for Professional Development's trainer support initiatives for 2014 and 2015
- Align the trainer support process more closely with supports from the Child Care Aware of Minnesota system.

This alignment will be beneficial, as the Minnesota Center for Professional Development sets minimum requirements for trainers and Child Care Aware specifies additional standards for its trainers.

Initiatives Related to Relationship-based Professional Development

Twelve initiatives under the Relationship-based Professional Development topic area were in effect in 2013. Relationship-based Professional Development is the term given to activities related to coaching, consultation or mentoring to early educators or practitioners. The 2013 Relationship-based Professional Development initiatives included:

- Child Care Aware professional development advising
- Minnesota Reading Corps
- Child care health consultants
- Consultation for those serving children with special needs
- Parent Aware quality coaching
- Early childhood mental health supports
- The Center for Coaching and Mentoring at Minnesota State University, Mankato
- Head Start Mentor Project for Parent Aware CLASS coaching
- The Centers of Excellence – Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children foundation coaches and/or professional development facilitators
- Minnesota licensed family Child Care Aware mentors
- Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation facilitation project consultants
- Standards for approving and recognizing Relationship-based Professional Development.

Child Care Aware Professional Development Advising

Key Goals

Assist individuals working in child care programs in cataloging past trainings, identifying key areas for growth, and setting individualized professional development goals.

Link Child Care Aware professional development advisors and their advisees.

With funding from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, each Child Care Aware district office includes a professional development advisor who helps child care professionals access professional development opportunities, and documents their progress. Professional development advisors often work closely with Parent Aware quality coaches to support lead teachers/providers in programs seeking a Parent Aware rating. They work with individuals to gather learning records and ensure that program staff have taken coursework that will meet the Parent Aware indicators. Beyond Parent Aware, Child Care Aware professional development advisors will meet with child care providers to inventory prior learning and create plans for achieving professional goals.

2013 Progress

The majority of Child Care Aware professional development advising done in 2013 was over the phone and in conjunction with a Parent Aware quality coach. In 2013, as the number of counties using Parent Aware ratings has grown, so has the

interest in Child Care Aware professional development advising, and the number of people receiving professional development advising. In 2013, advisors saw an increase in the number of inquiries about advising and the conversations with interested parties.



As the use of Parent Aware ratings has grown, so has the interest in Child Care Aware professional development advising throughout Minnesota.

Minnesota Reading Corps

Key Goals

Positively impact early literacy development of children in family child care settings in the Minneapolis Northside Achievement Zone and St. Paul Promise Neighborhood.

Encourage family child care providers to seek ongoing professional development and quality improvement.

The Minnesota Reading Corps and Think Small are piloting an effort to promote literacy in young children in family child care homes in the Minneapolis Northside Achievement Zone and the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood. Providers must be licensed and in operation for a minimum of three years. In two-hour sessions, two or three days per week, members of the Reading Corps implement early learning literacy curriculum with children. Early educators are actively observing while the Minnesota Reading Corps members are working with children so that they can continue these literacy activities when the Reading Corps members are not there. Each Reading Corps member and family child care provider pair is matched with a Think Small coach to help facilitate the relationship-based professional development.

2013 Progress

In early 2013, nine family child care providers were identified and enrolled in the Minnesota Reading Corps program, including four in the St.

Paul Promise neighborhood and five in the Northside Achievement Zone. Thirty-eight children ages 2-5 were included in the 2013 cohort. Throughout the program, participating providers attended 11 monthly 150-minute professional development workshops at Think Small. The trainings were free of charge and the 20-25 hours can help providers to move up the Career Lattice. Twice every month, providers participated in a training session with their Think Small coach and the Reading Corps member that they worked with. Providers were given literacy materials, books for their homes, curriculum, and lesson plans that can be applied to Parent Aware quality rating, if providers pursue a rating.



Nine family child care providers were enrolled in the Minnesota Reading Corps.

Child Care Health Consultants

Key Goal

Promote high quality child care in the areas of health and safety through provision of health and safety consultation, technical assistance and training to early educators.

The Minnesota Department of Health sponsors a program to offer child care health consultation for grantees in the four Race to the Top Transformation Zones. Child care health consultants must be a registered nurse, public health nurse, or licensed physician. They offer health and safety assessments and recommendations, trainings, assistance developing individual health and emergency plans for children with special needs, and referrals to additional resources.

2013 Progress

The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant provided funding for child care health consultation services and for a staff position at the



Thirteen trainees went through the program to become child care health consultants in 2013.

Minnesota Department of Health. Three grants were awarded in 2013 across the four Transformation Zones, with one grant covering two zones. Eight nurses were trained using the curriculum from the National Training Institute for Child Care Health Consultants from the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill, Gillings School of Public Health. Outside agencies that did not receive grants could also participate in trainings, which recruited five additional, independent trainees.

Grantees have been working to advance programs by reaching out to providers and informing them of their services. Because of this, individual consultations are happening in one Transformation Zone and others are expected to begin in the near future. It is hoped that this first round of grantees will launch what will eventually be a statewide network of child care health consultants.

Consultation for those Serving Children with Special Needs

Key Goals

Increase the use of inclusion practices for children with special needs.

Develop skilled and knowledgeable providers serving children with special needs.

Increase the number of programs serving children with special needs.

Reduce incidence of programs expelling or refusing to serve children with special needs.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services has contracted with the Center for Inclusive Child Care to offer two services to Parent Aware programs serving children with special needs:

- Inclusion coaching, which involves relationship-based supports for up to 30 hours at the child care setting
- Consultation services for including children with special needs into child care programs.

This initiative helps to ensure that children with special needs are receiving high-quality, appropriate care from skilled and knowledgeable providers.

2013 Progress

The Center for Inclusive Child Care (CICC) worked to educate Parent Aware quality coaches by hosting webinars explaining the services and CICC coaching model. Efforts were made to increase the

number of programs using the service by training quality coaches on how to talk with providers and assist them in making referrals. Stakeholders held meetings to explore additional avenues to increase the number of referrals, which identified the need to serve children with behavioral challenges, as other service programs already serve those with diagnosed disabilities. The Minnesota Departments of Education, Health and Human Services staff worked together to explore how to create a more coordinated referral process among the three departments, while keeping in mind that the primary goal is to keep children enrolled in care and education programs, rather than re-enrolling them into different programs.

Funding from the Child Care and Development Fund supported consultation services and information provided online (trainings and podcasts), and the additional funding from the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant supported on-site coaching. The grant funded training (referred to as



Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant funds provided up to 30 hours of onsite coaching for providers serving children with special needs.

TACSEI Foundations training) on how to apply the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention (TACSEI) for Young Children Pyramid Model to family child care providers. In doing so, this effort expanded the number of providers who are trained in the Pyramid Model, and allowed CICC to continue to support individuals who complete the training over the phone and online.

Parent Aware Quality Coaching and CLASS Coaching

Key Goals

Provide intentional coaching designed to refine child care program interactions with children and prepare them for kindergarten.

Provide support to child care programs completing the Parent Aware quality documentation packet to apply for a Star Rating.

Determine steps to improve upon providers' current Parent Aware rating prior to a re-rating.

Parent Aware quality coaches use the Coaching and Advising Model to provide:

- Twenty to 30 hours of coaching for participants in Building Quality who are getting ready to enter Parent Aware
- Two to 15 hours of technical assistance when a program enters Parent Aware
- Three to five hours of technical assistance after a program receives a one, two, or three star rating.

In addition to the services above, child care centers applying for a Three- or Four-Star Rating can receive up to 30 hours of C.L.A.S.S. coaching.

2013 Progress

The Minnesota Department of Human Services held listening sessions with coaches to inform program improvements. Feedback from these sessions concluded that the program's model was written too rigidly, and there were barriers to implementing the program consistently across the state. For example, one previous requirement was that all delivery had to be face-to-face, which was too challenging for coaches in rural Minnesota who had to travel long distances.



The "Parent Aware Implementation Guide" was updated, based on feedback to encourage quality coaches to demonstrate fidelity to best practices in the field.

Feedback from the listening sessions was incorporated into the "Parent Aware Implementation Manual" and into the "Coaching and Advising Manual," which provides guidance to coaches about how to implement Parent Aware. Two major changes were made:

- Coaching skills and guidance on soft skills were omitted from the implementation guide to focus on the process. Flexibility was added to areas that had been most difficult for coaches,

and clearer instructions were provided for which steps can be done in groups or over the phone, and which must be face-to-face.

- Guidance for reflective practices was included, such as key questions in each section to stimulate reflection. According to coach feedback, reflection time was not previously included.

The first draft of the guide was released in October 2013 to a small group of coaches representing the Twin Cities metro area, greater Minnesota, and multiple linguistic communities. That group talked through the draft and provided feedback for the final version.

Early Childhood Mental Health Supports

Key Goals

Develop an infrastructure of early childhood mental health professionals, and improve provider capacity with state-sponsored trainings.

Increase assessment and treatment of young children with mental health needs.

Increase access to mental health services for uninsured children.

Improve clinical and functional outcomes of young children through mental health services.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services, Children's Mental Health Division, contracted with 20 mental health agencies across the state and national experts to build a statewide system for evidence-based early childhood mental health. A network of mental health professionals provides treatment and assessment for children birth to age 4 who are uninsured or underinsured. Services are provided in a child's home, mental health clinics, primary care offices, child care sites and schools. Professionals meet with the Early Childhood Mental Health System coordinator for four virtual meetings and one site visit per year.

2013 Progress

The Children's Mental Health Division issued grants for agencies to grow the capacity of Minnesota's early childhood mental health network. The division, and the Minnesota Department of Health, identified more than



Since the Children's Mental Health Division began awarding grants in 2004, more than 1,000 mental health professionals have been trained to use diagnostic processes for children between birth and age 4.

300 clinicians who will see children under age 5 for mental health assessments. This includes clinicians in 83 of Minnesota's 87 counties and two tribal mental health agencies. Between August 2011 and December 2013, more than 2,300 children and their families received clinical services. Stakeholders have continued to promote the referral system to help parents get assistance with developmental or mental health concerns.

Since 2004, more than 1000 mental health professionals have gone through state-sponsored trainings to use appropriate diagnostic processes for children. Clinicians receive ongoing training in providing mental health consultation to early educators. However, since consultation is not currently a billable service by medical professionals, there are limited funding streams to support offering it. One example of funding is small quality improvement grants provided to child care providers with a

Parent Aware rating. These dollars can be used to pay for consultation when the service is identified by a provider and quality coach as a goal in their Improvement Plan. Work in 2013 has been done to pursue additional financial resources and expand this service to a wider pool of child care providers. Because training has been consistently delivered throughout the state, when funding is available, mental health professionals will be able to begin consultation services immediately.

In 2013-2014, 20 child welfare professionals from five metro counties completed work in an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health curriculum piloted in collaboration with the Child Safety and Permanency Division, Minnesota Department of Human Services, and the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, University of Minnesota. Through this pilot, child welfare professionals developed expertise in infant and early childhood development, and learned how to use this knowledge to improve child and family outcomes in child welfare.

The University of Minnesota also offers a post-baccalaureate Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Certificate program for a variety of professionals and students looking to develop the skills necessary to support the social and emotional development of young children ages birth to 5.

The Center for Coaching and Mentoring at Minnesota State University, Mankato

Key Goal

Improve effectiveness of practitioners in early learning by teaching the essential elements of effective care and education through coaching and mentor relationships.

Minnesota State University, Mankato, and the Minnesota Department of Education organized an Early Childhood Mentoring and Coaching Community of Practice in August 2010. The project focuses on Minnesota's Early Childhood Indicators of Progress, the relationship among early learning standards, program standards, and the essential elements of effective care and education programs. A curriculum was developed for mentors and coaches using the foundations of e-mentoring.

2013 Progress

The project began in August 2010 and set out to complete task-related targets for the Center for Coaching and Mentoring at Mankato State. The project was implemented as follows:



Twenty-four mentors and 48 mentees will continue to connect the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress to their lesson plans and students.

- A group representing early childhood education mentoring and coaching convened to develop a curriculum focused on e-mentoring, early learning standards, program standards, and effective instruction for children at risk of being unprepared for kindergarten
- Master mentors and coaches participated in 30 hours of training on best practices for supporting mentees and formed an online community of practice
- Mentees established a memorandum of agreement with their mentor, completed online coursework related to core content for mentees, and entered into an online community of practice with their mentors.

The project ended in March 2013, with the last three months of coaching. Twenty-four mentors completed the program and each was paired with two mentees, all of whom were trained in connecting indicators of progress to lesson planning and student assessments. At the end of the program, focus groups were held with mentors and mentees to gather feedback. Findings informed the "Final Report of the Minnesota Early Childhood Mentoring and Coaching Community of Practice," which was finalized at the end of 2013. This report itemized accomplishments and evidence for achieving each of the task-related targets of the project.

Head Start Mentor Project for Parent Aware CLASS Coaching

Key Goal

Strengthen the skill level of all CLASS coaches working with Parent Aware-participating programs through mentorship with Head Start CLASS coaches.

Child Care Aware of Minnesota and local Head Start organizations collaborated to create a mentorship program. The goal is to increase the capacity of CLASS coaches employed by Child Care Aware, so that they can provide effective coaching on the CLASS observation tool to center-based programs participating in the Parent Aware full rating process. To build their capacity, Head Start CLASS coaches mentor Parent Aware CLASS coaches monthly for professional growth and capacity building.

2013 Progress

The Child Care Aware Coordinating Office contracted with the Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota, through funding provided by the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, to design and coordinate the mentoring project. Child Care Aware of Minnesota collaborated with the Head Start Association to identify individuals to participate as mentors and mentees. The Center for Early Education and Development created and offered a two-day training. The first day was for the mentors; the second day involved the mentor/mentee pairs to learn about best practices in a mentoring relationship.



Head Start CLASS coaches mentor Parent Aware CLASS coaches monthly for professional growth and capacity building.

Pairs of mentors and mentees worked together to establish a set of core agreements for how their mentorship would progress. In most cases, the mentors and mentees were not working in the same organization so they had to discuss logistics around meetings, and how mentees would get experience with the CLASS tool. Commonly, mentors agreed to have mentees visit a Head Start setting and practice using the tool, which helped to prepare mentees for their annual reliability test for using the tool.

Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention Foundation Coaches and Professional Development Facilitators

Key Goal

Build skills among practitioners who serve young children with disabilities in order to positively impact the development of identified children and provide meaningful family support.

The Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention (TACSEI) for young children works nationwide to improve implementation of research and evidence-based practices for early learning. TACSEI partnered with the Minnesota Centers of Excellence for Young Children with Disabilities to develop a statewide network of sites. Sites are partnerships among Early Childhood Special Education programs and child care centers or Head Starts in the region. Sites receive coaching on implementation of the TACSEI Pyramid Model, which is a tiered approach to promoting child wellness and targeting intensive services for those who need it. Partners are coached in monthly leadership meetings by master cadre members as external coaches, and ongoing work with an internal coach.

2013 Progress

In 2013, the number of TACSEI sites increased by 14, resulting in 36 sites, which include 167 classrooms and more than 1,500 students. Additionally, 10 new master cadre members were added, which further increased the ability to implement the model with fidelity and sustain the work being done. Participating programs had monthly coaching and leadership meetings, as well as ongoing coaching from an internal coach.



Fourteen new Technical Assistance Centers on Social Emotional Interventions for Young Children sites, and 10 new master cadre members were added, resulting in 36 sites across the state.

Minnesota Licensed Family Child Care Association Mentors

Key Goal

Improve the quality of family child care providers to meet the Parent Aware standards and become accredited by the National Association of Family Child Care.

The Minnesota Licensed Family Child Care Association, supported by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, works with experienced family child care providers to mentor other providers. Eligible providers are family-based and include care of at least one at-risk child. Mentors improve program quality and make steps towards achieving accreditation. Services are offered in three tiers:

- Free technical support to family child care providers
- Free initial assessments, in which trained mentors work with family child care providers to evaluate the steps needed towards accreditation
- Full support services, including one-on-one work with providers to change practices and meet Parent Aware and National Association of Family Child Care accreditation standards.

Providers are required to purchase a self-study guide and pay an accreditation application fee, but the fees are reimbursed in full after they achieve accreditation.

2013 Progress

Funding for this initiative was provided in two-year grant cycles, which end in June. The cycle that ended in June 2013 included 25 initial

assessments and five accreditations, with tier three mentoring each year. In July 2013, funding for the next two-year grant cycle was awarded and initial assessments began. For the second cycle, funding was expanded to allow for 12 accreditations per year.



Twenty-five initial assessments and five accreditations were funded in the first round of the program.

MNAEYC Child Care Accreditation Facilitation Project Consultants

Key Goal

Facilitate the national accreditation of 350 child care centers in the nine-county Twin Cities metropolitan area.

The Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children (MnAEYC) received funding from the Greater Twin Cities United Way and the Minnesota Department of Human Services to operate the Child Care Accreditation Facilitation Project. Through this project, MNAEYC provides services such as mentoring, coaching and consultation to child care centers seeking national accreditation in the greater nine-county Twin Cities region. Child care centers receive supports to set goals, work on quality indicators, and document quality practices to achieve national accreditation.

2013 Progress

In 2013, MnAEYC continued recruiting and supporting centers. By the end of 2013, 312 programs had been recruited into the project, serving an estimated 21,800 children, with the capacity to expand to 25,000. By the end of December 2013, 163 of the 312 recruited programs (47 percent) were nationally accredited, with 76 of those also rated by Parent Aware. Additionally, 82 programs committed to going through the Parent Aware rating process.

Distribution of Programs recruited to participate in the Accreditation Facilitation Project:

County	Number of Programs
Anoka	33
Carver	19
Chisago	0
Dakota	37
Hennepin	135
Isanti	3
Ramsey	60
Scott	11
Washington	13



One-hundred-sixty-three child care centers have been accredited after participating in the MnAEYC Accreditation.

MnAEYC estimated that roughly 1,414 onsite consultations, totaling 3,660 hours, were provided during the 2013 calendar year. Between on-site consultation sessions, emails and phone calls are exchanged between child care programs and project consultants. Programs participate in training sessions on topics related to standards and monthly cohort meetings to help share information and network with other programs. It is estimated that in 2013, participants received roughly 1,300 training hours.

Standards for Approving and Recognizing Relationship-based Professional Development

Key Goals

Include Relationship-based Professional Development activities on the Minnesota Center for Professional Development Registry

Allow practitioners to use approved Relationship-based Professional Development activities towards movement on the Career Lattice.

Relationship-based Professional Development services include coaching, consulting, advising and mentoring. This initiative is working to create standards for professionals who offer Relationship-based Professional Development (RBPDP) for approval as RBPDP specialists with the Minnesota Center for Professional Development. In collaboration with the Minnesota Center for Early Education and Development, proposed standards were developed, including criteria and a framework for approving RBPDP specialists, with guidelines for clock hour credits for providers who work with approved RBPDP specialists.

2013 Progress

Work in 2013 included coordinating with the Registry to determine which technical aspects of the effort would be possible. Stakeholders representing various possible endorsement areas to list on the Registry for Relationship-based Professional Development were included in a series of approximately 20 meetings to gain buy-in and to help determine requirements of each endorsement area.

The final list of endorsement areas applies to providers across sectors. There is an individualized set of criteria for meeting each, with a customized set of trainings,

experiences or certificates. Throughout 2014, it is expected that the Minnesota Center for Professional Development will finalize criteria for approving 14 endorsement areas for RBPDP specialists.



Across sectors, stakeholders are collaborating to establish shared criteria for 14 types of Relationship-based Professional Development.

Initiatives related to Credentials, Certificates and Diplomas

There were five initiatives related to credentials, certificates and diplomas in operation in 2013; each of these efforts work to increase the numbers of practitioners who complete educational programs by either reducing barriers to education, or offering education directly. The 2013 credentials, certificates, and diplomas initiatives included:

- Child Development Associate Credential
- Director's Credential
- Minnesota Child Care Credential
- Infant/Toddler Credential
- Credit for prior learning.

Child Development Associate Credential


Key Goal

Increase the number of early care and education providers in Minnesota who have achieved the Child Development Associate Credential.

This initiative provides scholarships to help early educators understand the process for accreditation and receive the Child Development Associate Credential. With federal Child Care Development Fund and Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant funding from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Care Aware provides scholarships for training, the assessment fee or renewal.

2013 Progress

Between October 2012 and September 2013, 145 assessment fee scholarships, 52 training scholarships and one renewal fee were awarded through the program. In 2013, a new policy was instituted to provide scholarships via reimbursement rather than awarding scholarships up-front. This change was implemented as a way to encourage faster completion of the program, and to free up the funds for credential candidates who may not require much time.



One-hundred-forty-five assessment fee and 52 training scholarships, and one renewal fee were awarded to providers seeking a Child Development Associate Credential in 2013.

In 2013, there was a strong showing from communities of color in the scholarship programs. Roughly 60 percent of scholarship applicants were from communities of color, while 40 percent were from Caucasian applicants. Recruitment efforts are being made to increase the number of rural applicants, since only 25-30 percent of applicants were from greater Minnesota.

Director's Credential

Key Goal

Advance the careers of directors, family child care providers, assistant directors and teachers through professional education on providing high quality care to children and families in center-based programs.

Eager to Learn has collaborated with the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children (MnAEYC) to deliver the Director's Credential learning community as an online, cohort-based program for child care center directors and assistant directors. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) cosponsors the Director's Credential, which meets the director training requirements for NAEYC accreditation. Eager to Learn offers the coursework, which includes 144 course hours over 11 months centered on supervision, management and administration, and a practicum project. MnAEYC awards the final credential. Child care centers with a director that has achieved the Director's Credential earn an extra point towards the Parent Aware Rating.

2013 Progress

The requirements for who was eligible to go through the program now allow for anybody preparing for a leadership role, rather than just directors. Often, high-quality teachers are recognized as being highly capable

and recommended for director positions, but may not have backgrounds in supervision, management and administration. With the more open admission requirements, the 2013 cohort included a cross-disciplinary group of providers, school age care directors, instructors and infant/toddler directors. The curriculum was modified in 2013 to be more culturally responsive.

Early in 2013, 11 people from the 2012 cohort received the credential. In January 2013, a cohort of 17 students, split nearly evenly between directors from inside and outside of the Twin Cities, began. By the end of 2013, the next cohort was nearly ready to begin.



Eleven directors received the Director's Credential and a new cohort began with 17 participants.

Minnesota Child Care Credential

Key Goal

Increase the number of Minnesota early educators achieving the national Child Development Associate Credential.

The Minnesota Child Care Credential began in 2011. Funded by the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, it started undergoing revisions in 2012 based on participant feedback and expected to be completed in early 2014. The Minnesota Department of Human Services provides partial reimbursement for the costs of completing the Minnesota Child Care Credential, which includes 120 hours of training. Training hours are eligible for the Child Development Associate Credential.

2013 Progress

Based on information gathered from past participants about their experiences with the program, decisions were made to:



The first Spanish-speaking cohort of providers completed the Minnesota Child Care Credential in 2013.

- Reduce the number of training hours from 123 to 120
- Reorder coursework to align more closely with Parent Aware and the national Child Development Associate Credential
- Reduce the two-year cohort commitment time.

While these revisions were underway, fewer cohorts were offered. This resulted in a decrease in the number of participants earning the credential: 73 credentials awarded in 2012 compared to 62 in 2013. However, the first-ever Spanish-speaking cohort completed the credential in 2013 and greater participation expected in 2014.

Infant/Toddler Credential

Key Goal

Increase the number of providers achieving the level one Infant/Toddler Mental Health Endorsement.

Currently under development, the Minnesota Infant/Toddler Credential recognizes the special skills needed to provide high quality care and education to infants and toddlers. The credential consists of 30 hours of training and meets all requirements for level one of the Minnesota Infant/Toddler Mental Health Endorsement program, and some training indicators in Parent Aware.

2013 Progress

Through a contract with the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED), University of Minnesota, is overseeing the

credential development. Staff at CEED consulted with experts on infant and toddler development for content. The goal is to create a program that is relevant across sectors, so that it attracts professionals in various settings, including child care professionals, home visitors and child welfare workers. The content for the 30 hours of training should be complete by summer 2014.



Development of a Minnesota Infant/Toddler Credential is currently underway, in alignment with other initiatives.

Credit for Prior Learning

Key Goal

Encourage and accelerate placement in higher education so that early childhood professionals can earn credentials needed for career advancement in less time.

Minnesota currently has multiple pathways for early child care providers and professionals to gain training, including formal education, non-credit courses and experiential learning. To encourage professionals to pursue higher education opportunities, ease the transition into these institutions and accelerate the process, some institutes of higher education offer credit for previous experiences and trainings. The Minnesota Center for Professional Development, through its grant contract with the Minnesota Department of Human Services, works to promote programs that offer credit for prior learning, and offers information about these programs on its website. Institutes of higher education each direct their own policies for awarding credit for prior learning. The center does not directly award credit, or offer direct advising for credit for prior learning.

2013 Progress

In 2013, the Minnesota Center for Professional Development updated its website to include information on what credit for prior learning is, and links to select programs that offer credit for prior learning. Future efforts and conversations with institutes of higher education will inform updates to the list.



The Minnesota Center for Professional Development is providing information to early educators looking to get credit for prior learning through institutes of higher education.

Initiatives Related to Core Competencies Framework Alignment Efforts

Because Minnesota has multiple sets of expectations for the skills and knowledge early educators should demonstrate, it can be challenging for them to understand the different expectations and those that apply to them. In 2013, two initiatives worked towards establishing a single set of expectations for educators, creating a clear path for educational advancement, including:

- Aligning Board of Teaching Standards with the Core Competency Framework
- Establishing Articulation Agreements within the Minnesota State College and University System.

Aligning Board of Teaching Standards with Core Competency Framework

Key Goal

Develop a knowledge and competency framework for professional development providers to use as a foundation for learning experiences.

The Minnesota Board of Teaching Standards describes expectations about the knowledge needed by licensed teachers working in early childhood. Minnesota's Core Competencies for early childhood care and education providers describe the skills and abilities needed to be able to work effectively with young learners. This initiative aims to align Minnesota's Core Competencies with the Board of Teaching Standards. The final product will be three user-friendly Core Knowledge and Competency Frameworks, based on specialty areas (one each for infant/toddler, preschool and family child care). Credit and non-credit professional development can be categorized according to the Framework. Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant funding made this initiative possible.

2013 Progress

In 2013, an advisory group, including representatives from higher education, established a vision for what the revised knowledge and competency framework should look



Work is underway to align Minnesota's Core Competencies with the Board of Teaching Standards.

like. The group decided to have three versions of the framework. Each version shares general commonalities where appropriate, and adds particular information based on the area that it addresses. For example, the family child care version may include material on how to run a business, which would not need to be included in the other versions. During 2013, the advisory group made progress on all three versions and continue to work towards the final versions.

The advisory group will also create companion guides for the family child care and preschool versions. Work on the preschool companion guide was built on the existing infant/toddler companion guide. Work on the family child care companion guide will begin in 2014.

Establishing Articulation Agreements within the Minnesota State College and University System

Key Goal

Establish Articulation Agreements with two- and four- year education programs to allow students to transfer into new schools and receive credit for previous coursework.

Articulation Agreements are policies between institutions of higher education that allow students to transfer between programs and obtain credit for previous coursework. In order to make earning a degree in early childhood programs more accessible, schools within the Minnesota State College and University (MnSCU) system are working on Articulation Agreements between two- and four-year programs.

2013 Progress

Early in 2013, MnSCU two- and four- year schools had respective meetings to discuss possible plans for Articulation Agreements. Before these meetings, two-year programs had verbal agreements about how to work together and coordinate efforts without being competitive. The four-year colleges continued to meet throughout 2013. These schools continue to work toward establishing agreements that allow for articulation without negating the individual identity of each school or program.

In April 2013, the MnSCU state office supported development of an early childhood unity forum to bring together child care centers, Head Starts, representatives from two- and four-year early childhood programs, and the Minnesota Departments of

Education, Health and Human Services. The forum began a dialogue towards creating a seamless picture of early childhood education programs in Minnesota. After a year of work, Articulation Agreements specific to two- and four- year early childhood programs have not been signed, but significant progress was made in the number of different stakeholders included in the conversations. MnSCU made important strides forward, which is especially noteworthy considering this work was not directly written into the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant. Rather, it was an undertaking that MnSCU began on its own, added to the existing workloads of participants.



MnSCU supports ongoing efforts to establish Articulation Agreements between two- and four-year early childhood programs.

Initiatives Related to Scholarships and Financial Supports

In 2013, three initiatives provided financial supports for early educators to make professional development more affordable. Offering financial supports and scholarships helped to reduce barriers to professional development and incentivized providers to pursue Career Lattice advancement opportunities. Initiatives with these overall goals included:

- T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood ® Minnesota
- Minnesota Child Care Credential supports
- Retaining Early Educators Through Attaining Incentives Now (REETAIN).

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Minnesota

Key Goals

Increase the education, sense of professionalism and, ultimately, the compensation of the early care and education field.

Increase the commitment of professionals in the field and reduce employee turnover.

T.E.A.C.H. is a nationally trademarked program based in North Carolina. The Minnesota Department of Human Services funds T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® Minnesota to provide scholarships for child care and education professionals seeking their associate's or bachelor's degree for early childhood education or child development. Funding from the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant supported work to redesign funding to broaden prospects and ensure that funding more closely supports individuals working in Parent Aware programs.



T.E.A.C.H. scholarships are now more accessible and flexible for child care and early education professionals.

2013 Progress

In 2013, in addition to awarding scholarships to early childhood professionals, the majority of efforts surrounded redesigning the T.E.A.C.H. process to make it more accessible and locally tailored. Specific accomplishments included:

- Reducing the amount of co-pays required by child care centers from 10 percent to 5 percent
- Expanding the pool of eligible scholarship candidates to include directors and administrative staff
- Offering scholarships for trainers and those who would like to be trainers in the Child Care Aware system
- Gaining permission to use scholarships at a limited number of education institutions in neighboring states with Minnesota Articulation Agreements in place
- Reducing the credit load needed to be eligible for T.E.A.C.H. scholarships.

The Scholarship Redesign Task Force worked on designing these changes, and worked with T.E.A.C.H. at the national level to gain approval for the changes.

In the 2013 fiscal year, federal Child Care Development Funds and Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant funds supported provision of T.E.A.C.H. scholarships.

Minnesota Child Care Credential Supports

Key Goal

Encourage participation in the Minnesota Child Care Credential program, which ultimately leads to more professionals receiving the Child Development Associate Credential.

Minnesota Department of Human Services funding through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, and the federal Child Care Development Fund, subsidized the cost of the Minnesota Child Care Credential program. Local Child Care Aware agencies receive funding directly so that the credential training is available at one-quarter of the cost that it would be without the subsidy. This incentivizes professionals to register and enroll in the training.

2013 Progress

In 2013, one cohort completed the credential, which was the Spanish-speaking learning community. However, the below-target Minnesota Child Care Credential numbers are due to revisions of the Minnesota Child Care Credential currently underway. When the revisions are complete, the Minnesota Child Care Credential will more fully align with Parent Aware, and all 120 hours of training will contribute towards a Child Development Associate Credential.



The first Spanish-speaking cohort of providers completed the Minnesota Child Care Credential in 2013.

Retaining Early Educators through Attaining Incentives Now (REETAIN)

Key Goal

Retain well-trained, educated and experienced practitioners in the field to ensure that children receive the best possible care.

Through funding from the federal Child Care Development Fund, the Retaining Early Educators through Attaining Incentives Now (REETAIN) program provides a competitive bonus system designed to incentivize well-trained child care professionals to continue offering consistent care to the same group of children over time. To be eligible, applicants must:

- Have a degree or Child Development Associate Credential
- Have worked in the field for at least one year
- Be engaged in ongoing professional development
- Did not receive a REETAIN bonus the previous year.

2013 Progress

Child Care Aware of Minnesota Coordinating Office administers REETAIN bonuses, which are more competitive than other programs in the scholarships and other financial supports topic areas. In the federal fiscal year from October 2012 until September 2013, 89 of the 177 applications received bonuses. In the past few years, closer to one quarter of applicants received funding from the close to \$200,000 available for the program.



Eighty-nine REETAIN bonuses, totaling nearly \$200,000, were awarded in 2013.

Because of the large number of applications, new guidelines were established in 2013 to provide more specific eligibility criteria, aligning more closely with the goals of T.E.A.C.H. and the Child Development Associate. Updates include:

- Establishing a point system which rewards additional hours of training, participation in local associations and active leadership roles
- Earmarking money specifically for professionals working with infants and toddlers
- Establishing a policy that limits the frequency with which an individual can receive REETAIN bonuses to once every other year.

Initiatives Related to the Minnesota Professional Development Registry

The Minnesota Professional Development Registry is an online database that tracks the professional development efforts of child care practitioners. The Registry includes education and training that practitioners completed, and resources linked to available professional development opportunities. Members of the Registry submit information about their degrees, credentials, training and experience. The staff of the Minnesota Center for Professional Development verify these accomplishments and assign practitioners a step on the Career Lattice. There were four initiatives related to the Registry in 2013, including:

- Technology upgrade and integration of Registry with quality improvement efforts
- Individual training needs assessment
- Virtual career guidance

Technology Upgrade and Integration of Registry with Quality Improvement Efforts


Key Goal

Develop an integrated and engaging data system to document and support provision of quality care to children.

Under this initiative, with funding from the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant and other sources, the current professional development Registry is being replaced with a new system and will be re-branded as “Develop.” It will more easily facilitate the collection and application of data on professional activities and be more user-friendly, facilitating providers to track and plan their growth. The new Registry will upgrade the data system, integrate data related to for-credit and non-credit professional development, list Parent Aware ratings, and assign professionals to steps on the Minnesota Center for Professional Development Career lattice.

2013 Progress

In June 2013, the Minnesota Department of Human Services signed a contract with Registry, Inc., and on Sept. 4, 2013, the new professional development Registry was launched. Features of the new Registry include allowing professional development staff at Child Care Aware to be able to access more information and a link between the Registry and MNStreams (the Child Care Aware systems training data system, where customers go to sign up to register for trainings). MNStreams has a clearinghouse of available courses, which come from the Registry. Users now have the ability to link their individual and organizational accounts under a single login.



The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant helped to fund the launch of a new, user-friendly professional development Registry that supports alignment with Parent Aware, has more thorough data collection, and provides more transparency for users.

The new Registry established a link with the Minnesota Department of Human Services Licensing Division. Data is now pulled on a daily basis about which programs are licensed by the state to operate as child care programs. Course approval from the Minnesota Center for Professional Development has also moved online. Prior to September 2013, trainers or training organizations that wanted to get approval from the Center to offer a new course had to submit a paper application. Online submission allows for an easier user experience and faster processing.

Individual Training Needs Assessment

Key Goal

Facilitate informed career planning and development to early educators.

The Individual Training Needs Assessment is a self-assessment tool for providers to measure their understanding and use of Core Competencies, and to help plan their professional development. Questions on the Individual Training Needs Assessment are generally situation-based with an agreement-scale for how frequently respondents perform a task. After completing all questions for a particular Core Competency, the provider is given suggestions for the types of training or education that the professional should take in order to improve.

2013 Progress

Prior to 2013, the Individual Training Needs Assessment was available as a hard-copy, pen-and-paper version through the Minnesota Center for Professional Development and its partners. In 2013,

the content was redesigned to be administered online via the Registry. Work began to link the tool directly to the online career guidance services offered through the Minnesota Center for Professional Development. The online version offers more targeted questions and used at any time by any early learning professional who has a profile on the Registry. In 2013, software was developed to put the tool online, but it was not yet launched publicly. It is expected to be fully functioning and linked to the Minnesota Center for Professional Development's Virtual Career Guidance in 2014.



The groundwork was laid to make the Individual Training Needs Assessment available online, and to link it with online career guidance services.

Virtual Career Guidance

Key Goal

Assist with long-term planning and professional development pathways for early care and education professionals on the Registry.

The Minnesota Center for Professional Development is working to develop an online career guidance tool with information about early care and education careers and the types of for-credit and non-credit programs and resources available to support entrance to or progression in these careers. This resource is intended to help people discover rewarding work and fulfilling careers, and to help professionals meet their long-term career goals. The tool will use the results of the Individual Training Needs Assessment to individualize the guidance provided.

2013 Progress

Content for the various aspects of the career guidance website was developed over the course of 2013. The tool allows those who are new to the field, or looking for a change, to browse career information and the types of trainings and education required at each level. When professionals go through the Individual Training Needs Assessment, they are linked to professional development resources that would help them advance on the Career Lattice. This service is also being linked to the Registry, which encourages people to document their education, credentials and training.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services shifted its contract for the Minnesota Center for Professional Development to a different vendor in 2014, with a subsequent change in the website host. Work was done to switch the website and make technological upgrades. The career guidance site will be launched when the redesign is complete.

Appendix B: Expanded Methodology

The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant specifies that an annual report on Race to the Top-funded projects, goals and outcomes be published annually. Building from the 2012 annual report, data for this report was collected through two primary methods: A series of phone interviews with key initiative contacts, and three work group sessions to build consensus about the history, current status and future work.

Defining the Scope

The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant required all programs and efforts that received Race to the Top funding during the 2013 calendar year to be included in the annual report. In addition, staff from the Office of Early Learning made the decision to include a number of efforts that indirectly benefitted from Race to the Top funding, were especially integral to supporting Race to the Top-funded projects, and/or assisted the state in being competitive for receiving the Early Learning Challenge Grant. This process resulted in the inclusion of 32 projects (or initiatives) that fall under six categories of work (topic areas).

Key Contact Interviews

After projects were identified, staff members from the Office of Early Learning developed a master list of one or two key contacts for each of the initiatives. Key contacts were selected based on their overall familiarity and involvement in the work and leadership on achieving key goals.

Researches from The Improve Group followed up with each key contact through email to schedule phone interviews; interviews lasted between 20 and 90 minutes, depending on the number of initiatives for which the interviewee was the primary contact.

The interviews served to update existing descriptions for each of the initiatives, provide an overview of progress from the 2013 calendar year, and to share data. For initiatives included in the 2012 annual reports, interviewees were provided with the initiative description, key goals, evidence for achieving goals, and next steps sections that appeared in the public and technical reports for 2012. They were asked to discuss what had changed and what still held true since the previous year. Interviewees were also asked about their connections and level of involvement with other initiatives, both within the topic area that they work, as well as across all Great Workforce initiative areas.

Work Group Sessions

Three work group sessions with state employees from the Minnesota Departments of Education, Health, and Human Services involved in Great Workforce activities, informed the content of this report. The first session was held in December 2013, titled “Exploring the Landscape.” The primary goals of this session were to develop a shared history to assess where the work and goals are today and how they got to this point, to celebrate progress and to strengthen connections among different topic areas.

The second session, held in March 2014, was titled “Discovering New Territory.” The primary goals of the session were to understand the gaps that exist within the work, explore potential directions for future work, and to strengthen connections among the different topic areas. At the time of the second session, all initiative interviews were completed and, based on interviewee responses, a map of the connections and connection’s strength among the initiatives had been completed. This map was shared with session participants to generate a discussion about what they saw as being important areas to concentrate future work, current gaps, and the changes that they expected to see over time.

A third work group session, held in mid-June 2014, provided a time to reflect on the 2013 process, celebrate 2013 accomplishments, and plan directions for future work.

Overall, these sessions contributed to the 2013 annual report by ensuring that all findings were placed within a shared context, and that all recommendations would be realistic and actionable. Where the series of interviews helped to gather information and perspectives from individuals and key contacts, the work group sessions helped to ensure that the full group contributed to and understood the findings, and how they fit within the broader context of Minnesota’s broader early care and education system.