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## **Report on Early Childhood Curriculum Alignment Grants for Institutes of Higher Education**

Report to the Legislature

As required by Laws of Minnesota 2023, chapter 54, section 20, subdivision 24

December 2025

## For more information:

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As requested by Minnesota Statutes, section 3.197: This report cost approximately \$1067.32 to prepare, including staff time, printing and mailing expenses.

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## Legislative Charge

[Minnesota Laws 2023, chapter 54, section 20, subdivision 24\(b\)](#), requires the commissioner to report on the Early Childhood Curriculum Alignment Grants for Institutes of Higher Education by December 1, 2025. The report must include the number of grant applications received, the criteria applied by the commissioner for evaluating applications, the number of grants awarded, grant recipients, and amounts awarded, early childhood education curricular reforms proposed by each recipient institution, grant outcomes for each recipient institution, and other information identified by the commissioner as outcome indicators.

Note: This grant is funded through the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) but supported through an interagency agreement by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF).

## Executive Summary

### **Grantee Outcomes from July 2024 to July 2025:**

During Fiscal Years 2024–25, Minnesota’s Early Childhood Curriculum Alignment Grant supported postsecondary institutions in aligning early childhood education (ECE) curricula with the Minnesota Knowledge and Competency Framework (KCF) and related state and national standards. The grant enabled cross-institutional collaboration, statewide convenings, curriculum revisions, and creation of shared tools and resources.

Across all participating institutions, the grant produced significant progress toward consistent integration of the KCF into coursework, assessments, syllabi, and program structures. Institutions also aligned their curricula with the Standards of Effective Practice (SEPs) required by the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB), the Child Development Associate (CDA) competencies, NAEYC standards, and CLASS dimensions, thereby strengthening transferability and coherence across Minnesota’s early childhood education pathways. Faculty participation across the state was robust and consistent. Three statewide convenings facilitated shared understanding, troubleshooting, and co-development of deliverables. Evaluation results demonstrated extremely high satisfaction with the convenings, including 100% agreement that facilitators supported communication and engagement.

Infrastructure developed during this grant—including the statewide Community of Practice (CoP) housed in D2L, a KCF assessment item bank, regional networks, and standardized syllabus templates—creates durable structures to sustain alignment efforts into future years.

Although some activities extend into FY26 due to grant timing (e.g., KCF Observation Tool updates, LETRS cohort training), the overall interim progress substantially advances the legislative intent of improving early childhood curricula across Minnesota’s postsecondary institutions.

## Key Findings

**1. Statewide curriculum alignment with the KCF progressed rapidly and comprehensively.**

Most institutions completed or are nearing completion of aligning course outcomes, assignments, assessments, and syllabi with KCF content areas and SEPs.

**2. The grant significantly strengthened standardization across institutions.**

Shared resources—including crosswalks, templates, and assessment tools—have increased consistency across early childhood programs statewide.

**3. Collaborative faculty convenings were highly effective and widely valued.**

Evaluation data show 100% satisfaction with facilitator support and collaborative engagement, with growing emphasis on actionable alignment tools.

**4. The new statewide Community of Practice (CoP) is a lasting infrastructure asset.**

The D2L CoP now engages 29 faculty members, supporting sustained collaboration, shared resources, and consistency beyond the grant period.

**5. Institutions made meaningful progress in assessment development.**

The KCF assessment item bank under development will allow systematic evaluation of student mastery of KCF competencies.

**6. Some deliverables extend into FY26 due to timing constraints.**

These include the KCF Observation Tool revision, LETRS Early Childhood cohort launch, and statewide crosswalks for student-facing materials.

**7. The grant advanced faculty capacity and strengthened statewide relationships.**

Faculty valued the compensated time, networking, and shared work, reporting a renewed sense of collective purpose.

## Introduction

The Minnesota Early Childhood Curriculum Alignment Grant supports postsecondary institutions in strengthening the quality and consistency of early childhood education (ECE) programs statewide. The primary legislative purpose is to improve ECE curricula by incorporating or conforming to the Minnesota Knowledge and Competency Framework (KCF), ensuring that early childhood professionals in the state are prepared with the competencies essential for high-quality practice.

This report summarizes grantee activities and evaluates the effectiveness of those activities in meeting grant objectives. The information is drawn from interim reports submitted by participating colleges and universities for grant activities conducted between November 2024 and June 2025.

The chart below identifies each grantee, their partners if applicable and the total award amount.

Grantee	Partner(s)	Award Amount
South Central College	Minnesota State College Southeast, Minnesota State Moorhead, and Northwest Technical College	\$105,728

Grantee	Partner(s)	Award Amount
Metropolitan State University,	Minneapolis Community and Technical College, Dakota County Technical College, and Ridgewater College, St. Cloud State University, St. Paul College, Bemidji University	\$189,917.23
St. Cloud Technical College	n/a	\$30,000
Minnesota North College	University of Minnesota Duluth, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, Itasca Area Schools Collaborative	\$ 23,185.00

## Grantee Goals

**South Central College (SCC)** is committed to collaborating on the alignment of MDE’s Knowledge and Competency Framework (KCF) with current early childhood education curriculum. Up to this point, SCC has not integrated KCF into their curriculum as their focus has been on Standards of Effective Practice (SEP) requirements, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards and Minnesota’s Early Childhood Indicators of Progress benchmarks. This work will add an element of quality to the current curriculum and future early childhood educators.

**Metropolitan State University** will map coursework between Early Childhood Studies and Urban Early Childhood Education according to state and local standards: Knowledge and Competency Framework for Early Childhood Professionals (KCF), Standards of Effective Practice (SEP), Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB), National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and the Child Development Associate Credential (CDA). They will continue to embed original KCF content areas with a focus on the following content: Child Development and Learning, Assessment, Evaluation and Individualization, Professionalism, and Clinical Practice. Embedding work will include course revision of assignments, activities, and rubrics. The work will align the new SEPs in ECE courses to meet the PELSB licensing requirements to allow a seamless integration of the KCF in Urban ECE and ECS. They will participate on the development of a tool from the Minnesota Knowledge and Competency Framework for “traditional” assessment of knowledge and competency content and level that can be utilized throughout the state by IHE and general field. Lastly, Metro State will act as the regional co-lead representation for planning of the statewide efforts and evaluation.

**St. Cloud Technical & Community College (SCTCC)** will emphasize the importance of assessments and maintaining high academic standards. The grant opportunity will enable them to highlight a systematic approach to curriculum alignment using various frameworks like the Minnesota Knowledge and Competency Framework, PELSB, SEP, CDA, and NAEYC. This alignment is key to ensuring that the curriculum meets high academic standards, which is a central goal of SCTCC and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The work will focus on developing and enhancing educational programs based on rigorous standards and frameworks, ensuring that practices are grounded in evidence and increase consistency across the state. In addition, we will collect quantitative data on the number of faculty participating in workshops, the number of curricular revisions made, and the alignment of courses with the KCF and other standards. Initial data collection, baseline data, will be gathered at the outset of the initiative (June 2024) to establish benchmarks for comparison. Ongoing monitoring

and regular data collection will occur after each major activity (e.g., workshops, check-ins) and at bi-annual workshop.

### **Curricular Reforms Proposed: Partners**

**Minneapolis Community and Technical College (MCTC)** is working on alignment of the SEPs using a crosswalk and assign KCF competencies to specific courses in the MinnState System. In collaboration with other grantees MCTC will work toward consistency through all campuses that offer ECE courses. Work will be done to update Learner Outcomes for ECED courses at Minneapolis College. They will create assignments and assessments for ECED courses. They will lead the work on the creation of a Desire to Learn (D2L) site for the Community of Practice to be utilized throughout MinnState ECE programs.

**Dakota County Technical College (DCTC)** participated in regional and statewide collaboration of 2- and 4-year Minnesota State IHE early childhood teacher education program faculty. This goal effectively expands the current collaboration of 2-year IHE early childhood teacher education programs to include colleagues in the 4-year IHEs and allows the participating collaborators to carry out the alignment activities. In collaboration with interested colleagues from other 2- and 4-year IHE early childhood teacher education programs, DCTC will create recommendations for alignment of KCFs from content areas 4, 5, and 8 with early childhood courses including suggestions for knowledge and skill building activities (lesson plans), assessments, and rubrics. In collaboration with interested colleagues from other 2- and 4-year IHE early childhood teacher education programs, DCTC will create a report detailing the outcomes of the work sessions and overall collaboration including information the extent of curricula reforms proposed and implemented at participating IHEs.

**Ridgewater College** is working to align EDUC course learning outcomes to the Standards of Effective Practice and the Minnesota Knowledge and Competency Framework (KCF). They are also working to ensure the EDUC course learning outcomes are written in comparable language to the SEP's and KCF's.

**Minnesota State College Southeast** is dedicated to collaborating on the integration of early childhood education standards across the state and will serve as the project's "lead." Focus includes aiming to revitalize the Knowledge and Competency Framework Observation Tool (developed in 2017), ensuring it reflects the latest KCF updates and exploring how IHE faculty can utilize it. Rachel plans to research and help develop presentation materials that demystify state and national standards for early childhood education students. These resources will bridge theoretical knowledge with practical application, enabling students to explicitly see the integration of these standards in their coursework and future teaching practices. Rachel will also support the development of the Community of Practice site.

**Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSU Moorhead)** is committed to the collaborative work planned to include the furthering the alignment of KCF, SEP, and NAEYC standards into Minnesota Teacher Preparation programs to directly impact the early care and education workforce.

**Northwest Technical College** has previously collaborated with Bemidji State University and Leech Lake Tribal College to embed the newer KCFs and align coursework between the two-year institutions and the four-year

institutions. This successful collaboration has fostered the desire for more collaboration and alignment. Being in a rural area, NTC can impact the workforce more directly. They are currently working on aligning Credit for Prior Learning with students bringing in a Child Development Associate certification and incorporating a “CDA on the Way” pathway to a two-year degree. This is the most opportune time to also work on aligning KCF, SEP, NAEYC, and PELSB standards to all courses offered. A comprehensive evaluation will be conducted at the initiative's end (May-June 2025) to assess effectiveness and inform future initiatives.

### Additional Grantee Added January 2025

A third round of grant funding was executed in the fall of 2024. One grant application was received from Minnesota North College. The application was reviewed, and a decision was made to award \$ 23,185.00 with the following goals identified:

- Collaborate with the existing state-wide KCF grantees to align Minnesota’s Knowledge and Competency Framework with current curriculum and programs and strengthen transfer partnerships.
- Align KCFs and SEPs with Minnesota North College’s ECED Transfer Pathway courses as directed by PELSB and the statewide KCF work group efforts.
- Update learner outcomes for all ECED Transfer Pathway courses at Minnesota North College to align with KCFs and SEPs.
- Write updated Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) policy for newly developed state-wide CDA equivalencies.

### Grant Amendments

The grants were amended in in May 2025 to add additional money and deliverables. The grants end dates were amended to June 30, 2026, including the certification year. The following chart outlines the total grant awards.

Grantee	Partner(s)	Award Amount
South Central College	Minnesota State College Southeast, Minnesota State Moorehead, and Northwest Technical College	\$ 139,478.00
Metropolitan State University,	Minneapolis Community and Technical College, Dakota County Technical College, and Ridgewater College, St. Cloud State University, St. Paul College, Bemidji University, added Pine Technical College	\$ 268,417.23
St. Cloud Technical College	n/a	\$ 31,250.00
Minnesota North College	University of Minnesota Duluth, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, Itasca Area Schools Collaborative	\$ 25,685.00

**The amendments included provisions for the following goals to be added:**

Metropolitan State University:

- Develop and implement a community review plan for evaluating the Knowledge and Competency Framework (KCF) Assessment Tool that includes students, faculty, state staff, and other identified stakeholders.
- Faculty will attend a Science of Reading aligned training/Professional Development opportunity. Use learning to inform curriculum development in alignment with the KCF and evaluate the alignment of the KCF tools to the Science of Reading (SOR), this can include attending a workshop event with the Early Literacy Specialist at the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and attending training such as Letters.
- Support updates to the Infant and Early Childhood Trauma Informed Practices Courses based on the trauma informed competencies of the KCF, designed for the Early Childhood Faculty Symposium modules created by Michelle Fallon and Glen Palm and offer higher education faculty access to participate in the updated modules through the Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health (MACMH) conference in November 2025.
- Add Pine Tech Community and Technical College to collaboration partners.

#### South Central College:

- Develop and implement a community review plan for evaluating the Knowledge and Competency Framework (KCF) Observation Tool that includes students, faculty, state staff, and other identified stakeholders.
- Faculty will attend a Science of Reading aligned training/Professional Development opportunity. Use learning to inform curriculum development in alignment with the KCF and evaluate the alignment of the KCF tools to the Science of Reading (SOR), this can include attending a workshop event with the Early Literacy Specialist at the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and attending training such as Letters.

#### St Cloud Technical College:

- Faculty will attend a Science of Reading aligned training/Professional Development opportunity. Use learning to inform curriculum development in alignment with the KCF and evaluate the alignment of the KCF tools to the Science of Reading (SOR), this can include attending a workshop event with the Early Literacy Specialist at the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and attending training such as Letters.

#### Minnesota North College:

- Faculty will attend a Science of Reading aligned training/Professional Development opportunity. Use learning to inform curriculum development in alignment with the KCF and evaluate the alignment of the KCF tools to the Science of Reading (SOR), this can include attending a workshop event with the Early

Literacy Specialist at the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and attending training such as Letters.

## Statewide Activities and Accomplishments

### 1. Statewide Convenings

Three statewide gatherings brought together faculty from two-year and four-year institutions across Minnesota:

Convening	Dates	Purpose	Outcomes
Kickoff Workshop	August 2024	Project launch, initial alignment, planning	Shared alignment protocols: cross-institution relationships formed
Mid-Year Check-In (MNAEYC)	January 31, 2025	Review progress; refine timelines	Hands-on alignment work; SEP/KCF placement reviews; networking
Summary and Showcase	June 2–4, 2025	Present completed work, finalize tools, plan next steps	Alignment charts; assessment tool review; CoP expansion

#### Evaluation Data:

- **100%** of respondents: Facilitators supported communication and engagement
- **100%**: Collaborative environment
- **91–93%**: Activities were relevant
- **Networking satisfaction increased from 93% (2024) to 100% (2025)**

These convenings were instrumental in creating consistent expectations and shared outputs across institutions.

### 2. Curriculum Alignment with KCF and Related Standards

Across all participating institutions, curriculum alignment activities included:

- Reviewing and revising course learning outcomes
- Embedding KCF competencies in assignments and assessments
- Updating syllabi with aligned language
- Creating crosswalks connecting:
  - KCF
  - SEP (PELSB)
  - CDA
  - NAEYC
  - CLASS
- Developing standardized assessment tools
- Approving revised course outlines through local Academic Affairs and Standards Councils (AASC)

By mid-2025, the majority of institutions had completed or nearly completed all required alignment actions.

### 3. Development of Shared Statewide Infrastructure Community of Practice (CoP) in D2L

The CoP, created and organized by Minneapolis College, now serves as the central statewide resource hub for:

- Alignment guides
- Crosswalks
- Syllabus templates
- Assessment examples
- TIP (Teaching, Integration, Practice) resources
- Meeting agendas and evaluation results

This infrastructure ensures ongoing access to shared materials beyond the grant cycle.

#### **KCF Assessment Tool**

Led by Metropolitan State University:

- A test bank covering all KCF content areas was created.
- Faculty reviewed draft assessment items at the June 2025 convening.
- Validation and refinement will continue into FY26.

#### **Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) Alignment**

Minnesota North College revised CPL policies to align with statewide CDA equivalencies, creating consistent pathways for recognizing prior learning.

### **4. Regional Networks and Cross-Institution Collaboration**

- Metro State University served as regional co-lead for meeting planning and statewide agreements.
- MSU Moorhead initiated a Northwest Regional Collaborative Network.
- SCTCC and SCSU collaborated to create a joint KCF alignment crosswalk.
- Multiple institutions engaged in transfer pathway discussions to strengthen 2-to-4-year transitions.

While participation varied by region, these networks strengthened communication and alignment consistency.

### **5. LETRS Early Childhood Training (Grant Amendment)**

Multiple institutions prepared for cohort participation in Early Childhood LETRS training.

This content will strengthen evidence-based literacy instruction aligned with the Minnesota Read Act.

## **Institutional Summaries**

### **Metropolitan State University**

- Completed mapping of KCF, SEP, CDA, NAEYC, and PELSB standards across ECS and Urban ECE programs.
- Revised course descriptions, learning outcomes, and assignments (ongoing for ECS).
- Led development of the statewide KCF assessment item bank.
- Served as regional co-lead and evaluation co-lead, developing and analyzing statewide surveys.

### **Minneapolis Community and Technical College**

- Developed standardized alignment processes and shared them statewide.
- Created unified syllabus templates and common assessments aligned to KCF and SEPs.
- Created and organized the statewide CoP in D2L.
- Completed all course learning outcome approvals.

**Dakota County Technical College**

- Updated course objectives and aligned them to KCF and SEPs.
- Led collection of statewide course data for specific KCF content areas.
- Contributed to statewide evaluation planning and reporting.

**Ridgewater College**

- Revised and received approval for all course learning outcomes aligned to SEPs and KCF.
- Working toward consistent inclusion of KCF explanatory language in all syllabi.
- Developing crosswalks connecting KCF, CDA, and PELSB standards.

**Minnesota North College**

- Completed alignment of all SEPs and KCFs to ECED Transfer Pathway courses.
- Updated syllabi and assessments to reflect aligned standards.
- Revised CPL policy for CDA equivalencies.
- Began planning for LETRS Early Childhood training cohort.

**St. Cloud Technical & Community College**

- Completed alignment of KCF competencies across multiple ECED courses.
- Developed a joint crosswalk with SCSU.
- Participated consistently in statewide convenings and planning.

**South Central College**

- Continued alignment of specialized ECED courses with KCF and NAEYC standards.
- Contributed multiple TIP resources to the CoP.
- Supported statewide workshop planning and evaluation.

**Minnesota State Moorehead and Northwest Technical College**

- Building a regional Community of Practice Resource Site.
- Created standards-based handouts for fall 2025 course integration.
- Completed major curriculum updates and alignment approvals for Fall 2025 implementation.
- Updated CDA-aligned certificate to support portfolio-based demonstration.

## **Grant Effectiveness**

Overall, the Early Childhood Curriculum Alignment Grant has been highly effective in advancing the quality and consistency of early childhood education programs across Minnesota. Institutions reported substantial improvements to their curricula, with KCF competencies now embedded throughout course learning outcomes, assessments, and syllabi. This represents a significant statewide shift toward standards-based instruction grounded in the Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Consistency across institutions has also strengthened notably. The development and use of shared crosswalks,

syllabus templates, and common assessments have brought greater alignment to programs, with additional refinements planned for FY26 to further harmonize expectations and implementation.

Faculty capacity grew considerably as a result of the grant. Educators reported an increased understanding of the KCF, deeper cross-institutional relationships, and a strong appreciation for the dedicated time to collaborate—an element often cited as essential to the project's success. These strengthened networks are expected to support continued alignment efforts.

The grant will result in the creation of sustainable tools and resources that will continue to benefit programs beyond the grant period. The statewide Community of Practice, the emerging KCF assessment item bank, and newly developed regional networks create long-term infrastructure that supports ongoing collaboration, resource sharing, and continuous improvement.

Importantly, the work undertaken through this grant is fulfilling its legislative purpose. Institutions across the state have made meaningful progress toward aligning their early childhood curricula with the Knowledge and Competency Framework, ensuring greater coherence and preparation for the early childhood workforce.

## Conclusion

The Early Childhood Curriculum Alignment Grant has substantially advanced the quality, consistency, and standards-alignment of Minnesota's early childhood education programs. Through collaborative statewide efforts, institutions have integrated the Knowledge and Competency Framework into the core structures of their programs, established sustainable statewide systems for ongoing alignment, and strengthened faculty capacity to deliver high-quality instruction.

These efforts directly support Minnesota's goal of preparing a competent early childhood workforce, improving program quality, and ensuring consistency across institutions. Continued investment in FY26 will allow remaining deliverables to be fully implemented and maintained.