

Minnesota's Great Workforce for Early Care and Education

2015 Annual Report



Minnesota’s Great Workforce for Early Care and Education 2015 Annual Report

Contents

Contents.....	1
Acknowledgements	2
Minnesota’s Early Learning Workforce.....	6
Overview of the Great Workforce Topic Areas	10
Collaboration Among Partners in 2015	15
2015 Accomplishments.....	17
Challenges Facing the Great Workforce.....	28
Recommendations: Opportunities and Direction for Future Work.....	30
Appendix A: Initiative Descriptions and Progress from 2015	33
Initiatives Related to Knowledge and Competency Framework Efforts.....	33
Initiatives Related to Training and Trainer Development.....	36
Initiatives Related to Credentials, Certificates and Diplomas.....	61
Initiatives Related to Scholarships and Financial Supports.....	68
Initiatives Related to Relationship-based Professional Development	73
Initiatives Related to Technology and Data Systems.....	94
Appendix B: Expanded methodology.....	99

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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

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, the Minnesota Departments of Education, Health and Human Services have been working on efforts to raise the professionalism of early care and education providers and to set higher standards for training, professional development and education provided to them.

In December 2011, Minnesota became one of nine states to receive federal funding through the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant, with \$45 million in funding from the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services.¹ The grant further supports the joint efforts of the Minnesota Departments of Education, Health and Human Services; specifically, its purpose is to increase access to high-quality care and education programs for children who have high needs and to build a great early childhood education workforce. The Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant ends in 2016.

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

Context and Purpose of the 2015 Annual Report

As part of the Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant, Minnesota 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, stakeholders decided to include efforts that, though not funded directly by the grant, align closely with 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 from the 2015 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 and relationships among multiple entities. In many cases, it would be cumbersome to identify all partners behind efforts and the role each played in 2015 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 settings and teachers in center- or school-based programs, coaches, trainers, administrators, educators, consultants and mentors. The field is diverse and career opportunities continue to expand. These efforts are described in this report as building and supporting a “Great Workforce” for those providing early care and education supports to children birth through third grade, and the personnel that support these early educators.

To organize work to build and support the Great Workforce, this report categorizes work into six topic areas. Initiatives in each topic area aim to move members of the workforce up the Career Lattice and/or to support and recognize the increasing professionalization of the workforce.

The six topic areas used to categorize the 50 individual initiatives in 2015 included:

- Knowledge and Competency Framework
- Training and trainer development
- Credentials, certificates and diplomas
- Scholarships and financial supports

- Relationship-based professional development
- Technology and data systems.

Overview of the 2015 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 2015 calendar year. Appendix A includes a full list of all 50 initiatives under the six topic areas, with descriptions and reports on progress towards achieving goals. This report also documents examples of collaboration among partner agencies, grantees and other key stakeholders, and informs recommendations for where to focus future work.

Methodology

To begin the 2015 report, state agency staff worked to identify the initiatives funded by and related to the Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant and key contacts for each. Two data collection methods informed the content of this report:

1. Key informants from each of the 50 identified initiatives shared updates on progress and key accomplishments about their work. Contacts shared information either through phone interviews or via email.
2. Initiative contacts and other stakeholders participated in a focus group-style meeting to identify collaborative progress and achievements, recognize shared challenges, and determine opportunities for future 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 not easily compiled. However, an estimate is possible using a combination of data from several sources, including a study periodically commissioned by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, which includes statewide surveys to gather context on the child care provider workforce and how its make-up has changed over time.² The most recent survey of the Minnesota workforce, conducted in 2011, estimated that its child care workforce included more than 43,000 workers, a number which included school-age care programs and license-exempt preschools.

According to the Minnesota Department of Education's Organization Reference Glossary, for the 2015-2016 school year, there were 6,251 early childhood licensed staff. Of those, 2,629 were licensed teachers working in school districts in pre-kindergarten, preschool, Early Childhood Family Education, School Readiness or Early Childhood Special Education programs. The Minnesota Department of Education cannot provide reliable data on non-licensed workforce members.

Additionally, Head Start employed 3,465 staff members in 2015,³ but many of these staff may be double-counted as child care staff since most Head Start sites are also licensed as child care centers. No reliable data is available on the number of individuals working in license-exempt community-based preschools, nor those working in tribally licensed child care programs. Acknowledging the limitations of data, Table 1 provides an estimate of the size of the early learning workforce.

² Valorose, J. & Chase, R. (2012). "Child Care Workforce in Minnesota: 2011 Statewide Study of Demographics, Training and Professional Development." Wilder Research and Minnesota Department of Human Services. <http://tinyurl.com/wilderchildcare>.

³ Minnesota Head Start Association, Inc., "Minnesota Head Start Facts and Stats, 2013-2015." <http://tinyurl.com/MNHSSStats>.

Table 1. Minnesota’s early learning workforce includes more than 40,000 staff members

Setting	Number of Staff
Child care programs licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services	35,500
Early childhood licensed staff in school-based programs	6,251
Head Start programs (may overlap with child care programs licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services)	3,465
Tribally licensed child care programs	Unknown
License-exempt preschool programs	Unknown
Total	More than 40,000

Child Care Programs

According to the Minnesota Department of Human Services, there were approximately 9,850 licensed family child care providers and 1,640 licensed child care centers operating as of December 2014 (most recent data available). The majority (62 percent) of licensed family child care providers were in greater Minnesota, and the majority of child care centers (61 percent) in the seven-county Twin Cities metro region. Although recent data is not available on the number of workers represented by these programs, data from the 2011 study of the workforce reveals that family child care homes employ an average of 1.31 individuals while child care centers employ an average of 13.87 individuals.⁴ Combining these two data sources, it is estimated that licensed family child care settings employ approximately 12,800 providers and assistants, and licensed child care centers employ approximately 22,700 staff. The latter includes an estimated 2,100 center directors, 11,800 teachers, 3,400 assistant teachers and 5,400 aides.

School-based Programs

According to the Minnesota Department of Education’s teacher license tracking system, during the 2015-2016 school year there were 2,629 licensed teachers working in school-based early learning

⁴ Valorose, J. & Chase, R. (2012). “Child Care Workforce in Minnesota: 2011 Statewide Study of Demographics, Training and Professional Development.” Minnesota Department of Human Services and Wilder Research. <http://tinyurl.com/wilderchildcare>.

programs. These 2,629 licensed teachers were employed in 322 independent school districts, 23 charter schools, seven special education cooperatives, six education districts, and two service cooperatives.

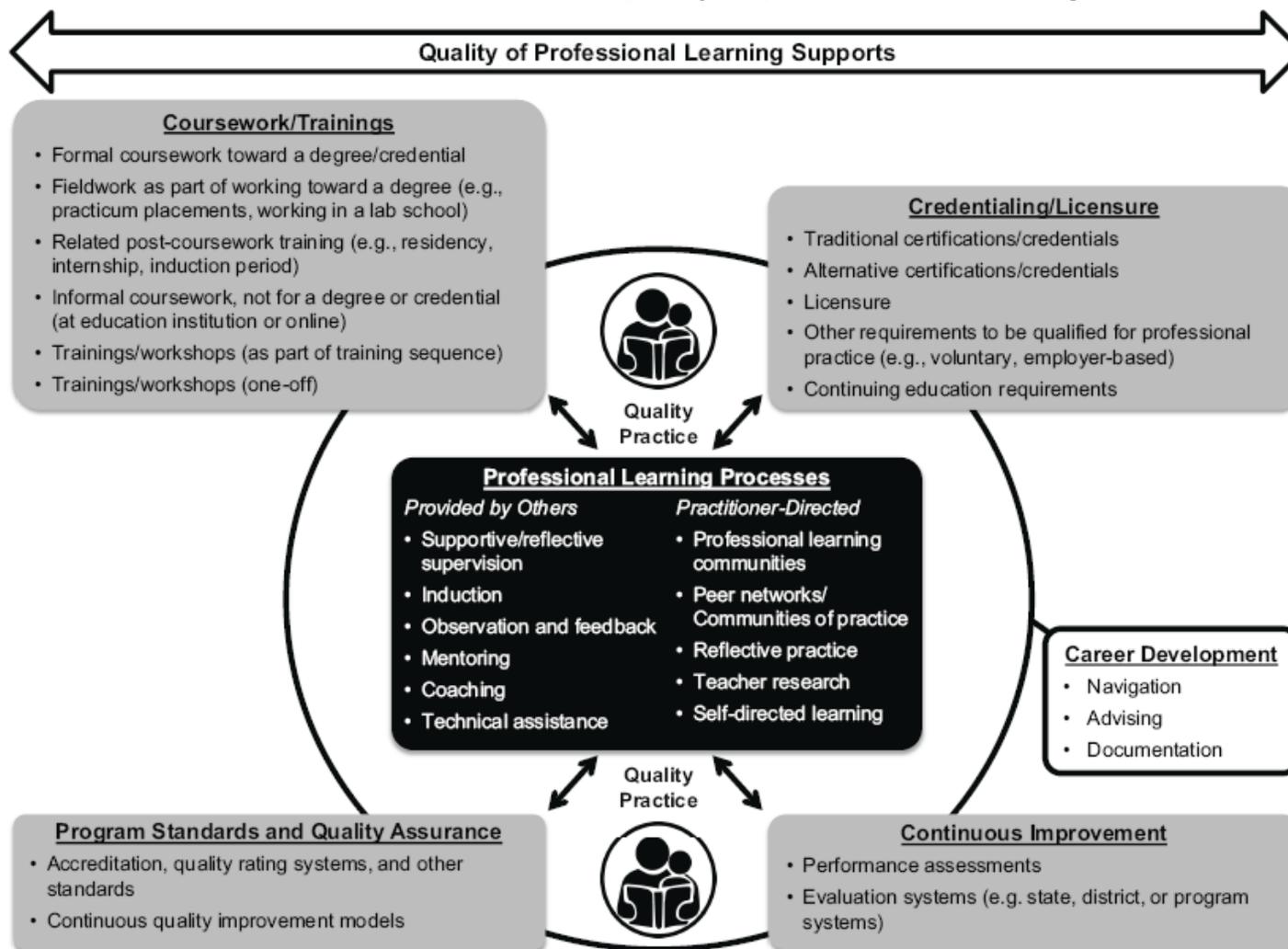
Head Start Programs

According to the “2015 Federal Program Information Report,” Minnesota has 35 Head Start grantees that provide services across the state. The majority of Head Start grantees also provide Early Head Start services (27 of 35). Minnesota Head Start grantees are housed within a variety of agencies, including 24 Community Action Agencies, three private/public nonprofits, one school system and seven tribal governments.

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 receive support to grow along with providers. According to the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, “young children thrive when they have secure, positive relationships with adults who are knowledgeable about how to support their development and learning and responsive to their individual progress. Thus, the adults who provide for their care and education bear a great responsibility” (p. 1-1).⁵ 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.

⁵ “Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation.” Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2015.

Figure 1. The Institute of Medicine and National Research Council outline the learning events and contextual factors that influence the quality of professional learning



Reprinted with permission from the National Academies Press, Copyright 2015, National Academy of Sciences Institutes of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council (NRC). 2015. *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press. P. 8

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 \$45 million in Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant funding 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.”⁶

From the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, “Preparation programs, training, mentoring and coaching and in-service professional development are critical direct mechanisms for developing and sustaining the knowledge and competencies for professionals” (p. 8-1)⁷. A set of contextual factors are important to enhancing quality care and education and retaining quality providers in the field.⁸ In its recent report, “Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation,” the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council present a broad, cohesive model for professional learning that encompasses both learning events and contextual factors that impact the quality of professional learning supports and ultimately lead to quality practice (Figure 1). These factors include for-credit coursework and non-credit trainings, program standards and quality assurance, credentialing and licensure, continuous improvement, professional learning processes and career development (p. 8-4).

Using a similar approach to create cohesion among professional development initiatives, Great Workforce stakeholders use a structure that includes six topic areas for organizing efforts to build and support the workforce for early care and education. The first topic area includes initiatives related to establishing an updated Knowledge and Competency Framework. Since 2004, the state has used a set of core competencies for early childhood education and care practitioners that define knowledge and skills to support child outcomes and development, based on the research of that

⁶ <http://www.education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/EarlyLearn/index.html>.

⁷ “Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation.” Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2015.

⁸ Ibid.

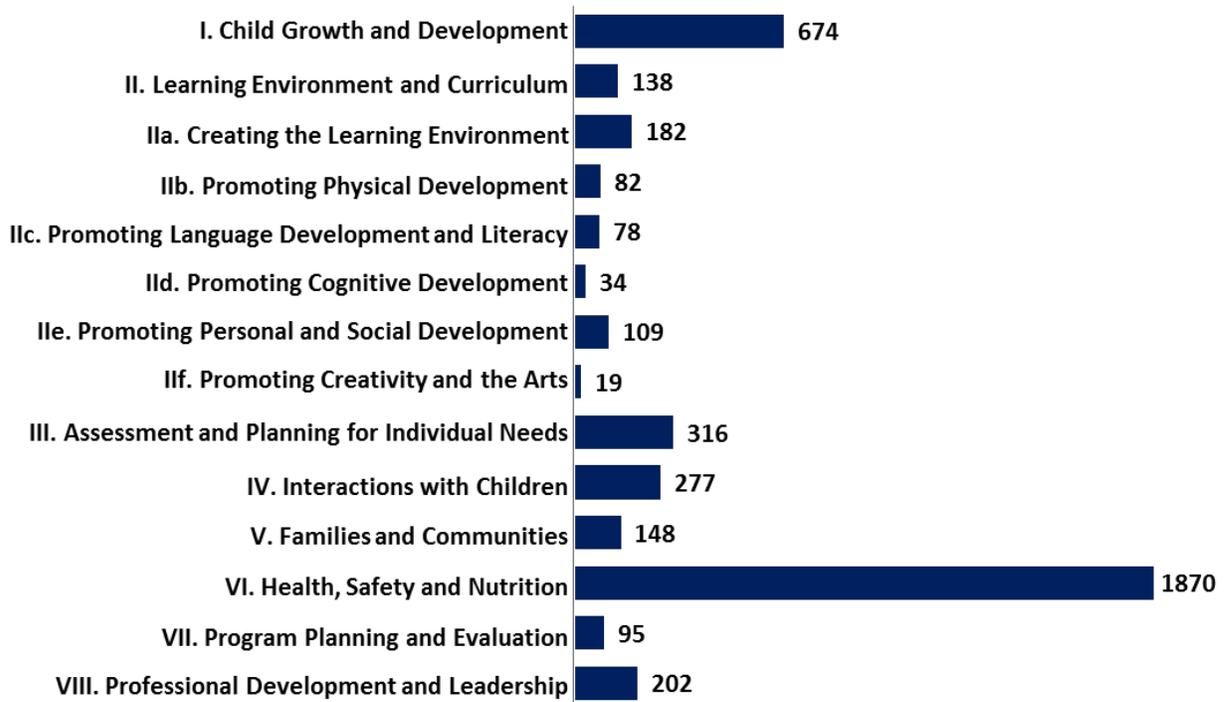
time.⁹ These Core Competencies have served as the basis for training and professional development in the child care field. Minnesota also has Board of Teaching standards, which are separate guidelines for early childhood teachers seeking licensure. In 2014, work was completed to align the 2004 Core Competencies with the Board of Teaching standards, a set of Knowledge and Competency Frameworks, which includes three specific versions, working: With Infants and Toddlers, with Preschool-aged Children in Centers and School Programs, and in Family Child Care. The initiatives in the Knowledge and Competency Framework topic worked towards using the Frameworks to update foundational trainings, and to enable smooth transitions among sectors and institutes of higher education for degree-seeking professionals.

Efforts in the **Training and Trainer Development** topic area serve to improve the skills of trainers to enhance training outcomes based on Minnesota’s Knowledge and Competency Frameworks. These initiatives are working to expand the pool of quality trainings and trainers, and to make trainings more available and appropriate for those served. These efforts build, at least in part, on the training and trainer approval process operated by the Minnesota Center for Professional Development (MNCPD). Figure 2 lists a breakdown of 2015 training events approved by MNCPD, by Core Competency area.

⁹ “Minnesota Core Competencies for Early Childhood Education and Care Practitioners who work with children birth through age 8 and their families,” First Edition, September 2004. A project of the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children in collaboration with the Minnesota Professional Development Council, funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the McKnight Foundation and the Midwest Association for the Education of Young Children.

Figure 2. The Minnesota Center for Professional Development approved more than 4,200 training events in 2015

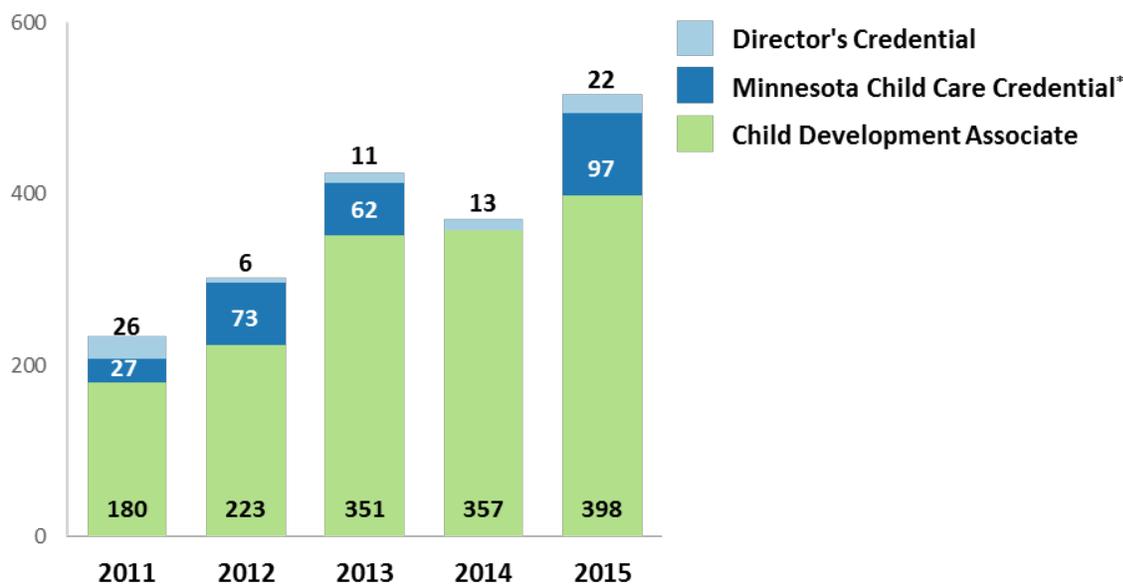
There were more than 4,200 approved training events held across Minnesota during the 2015 calendar year, displayed below by Core Competency. The Minnesota Center for Professional Development approved course content and assured that trainers leading the training events were appropriately qualified. Child Care Aware, the largest training provider in the state, offered 65 percent of these approved trainings.



Just as partners work to improve and monitor the quality and diversity of trainers and training content, efforts in the **Credentials, Certificates and Diplomas** topic area aim to recognize the quality of early educators and practitioners who have completed educational programs. These initiatives assist practitioners in completing programs and expanding opportunities to structure learning and recognize professional advancement. As shown in Figure 3, the number of credentials awarded increased nearly every year between 2011 and 2015.

Figure 3. The number of credentials awarded in Minnesota has been increasing since 2011

The total number of credentials awarded has increased every year between 2011 and 2015, with the exception of 2014, when the Minnesota Child Care credential was not available. All credential categories increased between 2014 and 2015.



*The Minnesota Child Care credential underwent changes based on participant feedback starting in 2012, which delayed participation and temporarily reduced the number of credentials awarded. The updated program launched in 2014, resulting in credentials awarded again in 2015.

In conjunction with 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. Initiatives 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.

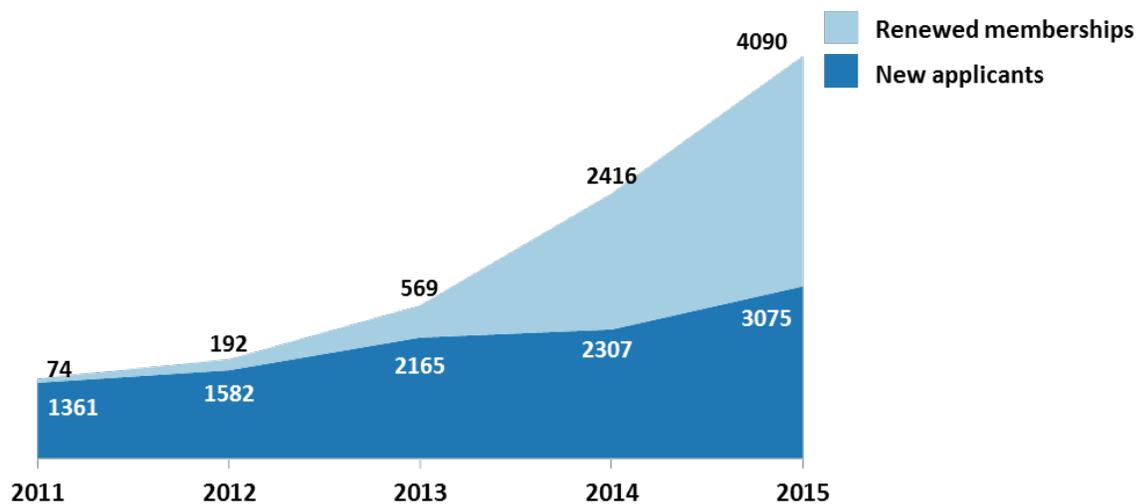
Great Workforce partners are also working to recognize the value of professional development experiences that happen outside of the typical adult training classroom. Efforts in the **Relationship-based Professional Development** topic area aim to provide tailored support and development opportunities to early educators in a variety of ways, including through coaching, consultation and mentoring. Some efforts focus on developing specific skill areas, while others help guide broader development of early learning programs and educators.

Other initiatives work to assist practitioners in planning for, learning about, and formally tracking their professional development records using **Technology and Data Systems**. Initiatives in this

topic area aim to make online systems more user-friendly and to engage more professionals in using these tools. The data systems also aim to improve the quality of data available about the workforce. One effort under this topic area works to increase access to Develop, Minnesota’s Quality Improvement and Registry Tool, which provides members access to their learning records and ability to search for local training opportunities by Core Competency. As shown in Figure 4, participation in Develop has increased every year since 2011.

Figure 4. Participation in Develop has increased every year since 2011

In 2015, the number of active individuals participating in Develop, Minnesota’s Quality Improvement and Registry Tool, reached an all-time high, with more than 7,100 individual membership applications. This is an increase of over 50 percent from 2014. Individual members include center-based staff, family child care providers, and other professionals who work in or support early learning and/or school-age care programs.



Collaboration among Partners in 2015

The partners involved in building and supporting Minnesota's Great Workforce use the six topic areas described earlier to categorize various efforts and communicate common goals. Within topic areas, each of the 50 initiatives works towards advancing unique, albeit interconnected goals. Due to the high number of initiatives and involved parties, it is especially important that there is collaboration across Great Workforce partners to address gaps and challenges, share resources, where appropriate, and avoid duplication.

While increasing collaboration and communication continues to be an ongoing effort for partners involved in Minnesota's Great Workforce, work in 2015 resulted in several particularly notable collaborations. In one example, collaboration among organizations helped to avoid duplication of efforts and provide clarity across overlapping sets of expectations. The initiative, which aimed at building consensus around best practices for coaching, recognized that many professional development organizations had individualized models for implementing coaching in their programs. However, provider sites often participated in two or more programs simultaneously, often with the same coach. This created challenges for the coach to incorporate and consolidate information while maintaining fidelity of implementation across programs. The Minnesota Departments of Education and Human Services coordinated meetings with professional development organizations to gain consensus on key coaching components, create sustainability across sectors, and build support for the Practice-based Coaching framework.

In some instances, collaboration was used as a tool to consolidate knowledge across organizations. As an example, the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) at the University of Minnesota utilized its network to gain input for a series of authentic assessment training modules. At the start of the project, CEED developed a survey for family and center-based child care providers, early childhood school-based services, Head Start, professional development providers, and the Minnesota Departments of Education and Human Services to help identify topic areas to be included in the modules. Partners provided input and helped to share the survey more widely throughout their networks. Information from the survey helped to identify priority topics to include in the modules, and supported creation of relevant and useful content. The final products, which were strengthened through this collaborative effort, are available free to all partners and practitioners.

In some instances, partners from different organizations worked on efforts to increase opportunities for networking and collaboration, and to reduce information and communication
Minnesota's Great Workforce for Early Care and Education, 2015 Report

silos. An example is in the Minnesota Department of Human Services' and Minnesota Center for Professional Development's pilot project to increase access to Develop by all early childhood care and education programs. With increased access by all programs, Develop can serve as a platform to facilitate cross-sector participation in training, relationship-building and opportunities for networking. Because of this project, Head Starts, school districts and state agencies became registered Training Sponsor Organizations, which comes with expedited course approval rights. It also encouraged these organizations to do outreach to child care providers in their service areas to engage in professional development opportunities for which they may receive approved hours on their learning records.

2015 Accomplishments

This section provides an overview of the progress made in each of the six Great Workforce topic areas during the 2015 calendar year. Information for this section came from interviews with key stakeholders for each of the initiatives within the topic areas, and during the cross-initiative collaborative meeting. More information on each of the initiatives is in Appendix A.

Knowledge and Competency Framework Efforts

Historically, Minnesota has had two primary standards or sets of expectations for the skills and knowledge an early educator should demonstrate, Minnesota:

- Core Competencies for Early Childhood Education and Care Practitioners (2004)
- Board of Teaching standards.

In late 2014, cross-sector advisory groups worked to produce competency frameworks combining the two sets of expectations into a single set of Knowledge and Competency Frameworks. In 2015, two initiatives worked towards using the Knowledge and Competency Frameworks to update foundational trainings and to create clear paths for educational advancement. This created a Knowledge and Competency Framework for early childhood educators and providers, and established Articulation Agreements within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system. Highlights of work from 2015 include:

- The Minnesota Department of Human Services began working with contractors to align training records in Develop with the new Knowledge and Competency Frameworks, and to prepare trainers to use them in foundational trainings.
- Companion guides were created for the preschool and family child care Knowledge and Competency Frameworks. The companion guides provide key concepts in plain language and offer examples for how professionals can demonstrate competencies.
- Faculty members from Minnesota two- and four-year early childhood program staff at institutes of higher education met to discuss approaches for establishing Articulation Agreements and to identify courses that might transfer.

Training and Trainer Development

In 2015, 18 initiatives contributed to training and trainer development by expanding the variety and quality of trainings and trainers available to early learning programs. At the time of the “2011

Child Care Workforce Report,” 57 percent of the child care workforce reported being 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 reported challenges finding convenient professional development opportunities. Because of these findings and other assessments of changing workforce needs, Minnesota state agency staff have worked diligently to expand the number of high quality, series-based trainings. This has also required expanding the pool of qualified trainers. Developing both course content and trainers helps to make opportunities more accessible to, and appropriate for, practitioners across the state.

The 19 Training and Trainer Development initiatives for 2015 were:

- Building consensus around best practices for coaching
- Developing a cadre of trainers to train on assessment and curriculum tools
- Developing a tribal trainer approval process
- Developing additional Parent Aware training content
- Development of training modules on authentic assessment
- Educating and supporting teachers and administrators on implementation of full-day kindergarten and pre-kindergarten through grade three systems
- Expanding the pool of bilingual and bicultural trainers
- Expanding training for professionals who serve young children with disabilities
- Expanding training offered via Eager to Learn
- Expanding training on early childhood screening
- Growing the capacity of Minnesota’s early childhood mental health network
- Improving the Minnesota Center for Professional Developments’ process for ensuring quality of trainers and trainings
- Supporting child care providers who serve homeless children
- Supporting the public child welfare workforce
- Training child care providers on the Child and Adult Care Food program
- Training library staff to offer early literacy workshops to parents and child care providers
- Training professionals on administering Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE) tests
- Training on Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs)
- Training teachers on administration of kindergarten entry assessments.

Key accomplishments in 2015 for this work were:

- Eager to Learn, Child Care Aware of Minnesota's e-learning program for early learning and child-age care providers, hosted 299 courses in 2015. This includes 239 traditional Eager to Learn courses and 60 courses through Anytime Learning, an online self-study module-based training program. The 239 courses had more than 2,800 completions and the 60 Anytime Learning courses had more than 16,000 completions.
- A cross-sector Trainer Type Advisory Committee convened throughout 2015 working to streamline the number of trainer types in Minnesota, while upholding a standard of professional knowledge and competency with the trainer approval process.
- Think Small doubled the number of new bilingual and bicultural trainers statewide since the 2013 baseline. Trainers speak an array of languages, including Amharic, Arabic, Bhutanese, Hmong, Karen, Oromo, Somali and Spanish.
- State Library Services facilitated four trainings and two trainings of trainers for librarians on the Every Child Ready to Read 2[®] curriculum. These trainings help library staff to work with parents and caregivers to support reading readiness in children.
- The Minnesota Department of Human Services, Children's Mental Health Division, wrapped up its initial Early Childhood Grants, which worked to build a network of mental health professionals to serve uninsured or underinsured children between birth and age 5. The grants supported certifications and trainings of trainers on various related topics for clinicians who ultimately served more than 3,200 children in 82 of Minnesota's 87 counties.
- The Center for Early Education and Development completed development of trainings on using authentic assessment in 12 topic areas and made the content available online. CEED began work on additional, more advanced modules, as well as develop content to be available in Spanish.
- CEED completed development of trainings for the newly updated language and literacy development and social and emotional development Early Childhood Indicators of Progress. Two committees convened to start updating the mathematical, logical and scientific thinking and problem solving Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs) domains.
- The Minnesota Departments of Education and Human Services coordinated meetings with stakeholders representing several professional development providers that use coaching in their practices to build consensus to support a practice-based coaching framework.
- Over 99 percent of public school kindergarten students participated in full-day kindergarten and, to ensure high-quality instructional practices for teachers, the Minnesota Department of Education expanded kindergarten-specific professional development

opportunities. These included webinars, practice briefs, in-person and online trainings, and an intensive Kindergarten Leader Institute series for principal competences and effective leadership of pre-kindergarten through grade three learning communities.

- The Minnesota Early Childhood Comprehensive System Grant funded a cross-agency collaboration to develop training strategies to support public programs that perform developmental and social-emotional screenings. These programs include local public health programs, health care providers, mental health providers, school districts, Head Start and Early Head Start and child welfare programs.
- The Minnesota Centers of Excellence for Young Children with Disabilities worked with 17 early childhood programs to install professional development innovations based on needs identified using the INSPIRE ACTION self-assessment tool.
- Forty-one trainers went through a training process in at least one of the six assessment and curriculum tools, for 49 completions. These trainings came out of collaborative work among the Minnesota Departments of Education and Human Services, and 11 training organizations to identify training needs.

The Bilingual/Bicultural Trainer Project: Highlights from trainers

Think Small works to recruit and support bilingual and bicultural trainers statewide to provide Parent Aware trainings in languages other than English. Three trainers recently shared their experiences:

Angelica's story

Angelica is from Mexico and is the assistant director at a child care center in the Twin Cities. While working towards the Minnesota Child Care credential, a mentor recommended she become a trainer, which she describes as a “fantastic way to share [her] experiences with other teachers.” She says going through the bilingual/bicultural training program has helped her to communicate with teachers and parents from diverse backgrounds. “We learned about connecting with other cultures... and understanding the backgrounds of the kids,” she explained.

Mohamed's story

Mohamed is a trainer in Southeastern Minnesota and became a needed resource for the region's growing Somali-owned child care centers. Mohamed explained that sharing knowledge is about more than translation; since he is Somali and bilingual, he is able to share concepts in ways that relate to the cultural values, traditions and norms of providers he trains. He says having a variety of cultures and backgrounds represented in the trainer cohort added value, and that “we were from different regions of the world, faiths and cultures... which contributed to the perspectives and overall learning experiences.” Similarly, Mohamed's English-speaking trainees frequently share that they value having a trainer with a different cultural background.

May's story

May has a background in elementary education and teaching English as a second language. Since going through the bilingual/bicultural trainer program, she has been training Hmong and English-speaking providers. Similarly to Angelica and Mohamed, May sees incredible value in being able to speak the first language of those she trains; she sees their confidence and engagement with the training material grow when they are able to communicate comfortably and know that their trainer can relate to their experiences.

Credentials, Certificates and Diplomas

Five initiatives in 2015 related to credentials, certificates and diplomas worked to increase the number of practitioners who complete 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 individuals working in non-school-based early childhood settings. According to the "2011 Child Care Workforce Report," an estimated 38 percent of child care workers held a bachelor's degree or higher (though not necessarily related to early childhood education or development). Another 18 percent held an associate's degree, Child Development Associate credential, or a certificate or diploma in a related field. The remaining 44 percent of child care workers had at most a high school diploma or GED. Given this wide range of education levels, a variety of credentials is needed to support professional growth of the workforce.

The 2015 initiatives related to credentials, certificates and diplomas included:

- Creating a Relationship-based Professional Development credential
- Delivering training for the Family Service credential
- Developing the Minnesota Infant/Toddler credential
- Offering the Director's credential online
- Promoting programs that offer credit for prior learning.

Notably, other initiatives related to credentials are listed in the section related to financial supports and scholarships. Key accomplishments include:

- Twenty-five professionals in two cohorts completed the Director's credential, which is up by nearly 50 percent from 2014. In addition, a third cohort with 13 more students, expected to complete in mid-2016, began work towards the credential.
- According to the Council for Professional Recognition, 398 professionals received, and 207 renewed, their Child Development Associate credential. Of the 605 awarded, 201 included infant and toddler-specific and 20 were bilingual-specific.

- Through a contract with the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota, developed the 30-hour Minnesota Infant/Toddler credential, which includes versions in English, Spanish, Somali and Hmong.
- Nineteen Minnesota Head Start grantees attended the Family Service Credential Training of Trainers. Once complete, these grantees have the capability to do credentialing with their own staff by systematically building the corresponding trainings into their programs, with support from the Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Network.

Scholarships and Financial Supports

Four initiatives provided financial supports for early learning program providers to make professional development more affordable in 2015. Financial supports and scholarships helped reduce barriers for accessing professional development and incentivized providers to pursue opportunities.

The scholarships and financial supports topic area includes financial incentives to encourage highly trained individuals to remain in the field, creating consistency 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, down from 12 percent in 2010 and 16 percent in 2005.

Initiatives that offer financial supports to prepare and retain credentialed educators included:

- Providing T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® MINNESOTA scholarships for higher education
- Reimbursement of fees for individuals completing credentials
- Retention bonuses through Retaining Early Educators Through Attaining Incentives Now (R.E.E.T.A.I.N.)
- Supports for individuals pursuing a Child Development Associate credential.

Highlights in 2015 include:

- T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® MINNESOTA awarded 122 scholarships, with 29 percent awarded to family child care providers and 71 percent to center-based program staff. This is up nearly 50 percent from the 82 scholarships awarded in 2014.
- Early educators received 159 assessment fee scholarships, 18 training scholarships, and 10 renewal fees for the Child Development Associate credential. The 213 scholarships awarded in 2015 represented an increase of nearly one-quarter from the 171 awarded in 2014.

- The R.E.E.T.A.I.N. program provided 171 bonuses, totaling \$376,000. R.E.E.T.A.I.N. bonuses incentivize well-trained child care professionals to continue offering consistent care to the same group of children over time. The number of scholarships increased by nearly one-fifth, while the overall dollar amount awarded increased by one-quarter from 2014.
- 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 and the Minnesota Infant/Toddler credential by 90 percent at the start of the program, and reimbursed participants for the additional 10 percent upon completion.

Relationship-based Professional Development

Relationship-based Professional Development is the collective term for activities related to coaching, consultation, or mentoring to early learning professionals. 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 in 2011.

This topic area included 17 initiatives in 2015, including:

- Advising Child Development Associate credential candidates
- Developing a coordinated referral process for connecting child care programs with inclusion coaches
- Establishing standards for approving and recognizing Relationship-based Professional Development
- Facilitating a user group to support Head Start staff in analyzing and using assessment data
- Improving the Quality Coaching model utilized in Parent Aware
- Partnering across agencies to support literacy coaching for family child care providers
- Providing additional training to Head Start home visitors who coach parents on child sickness and injury
- Providing consultation or mentoring to child care programs pursuing national accreditation
- Providing mentoring to family child care providers pursuing national accreditation
- Providing ongoing support to accredited child care centers
- Providing reflective consultation for Parent Aware Quality Coaches
- Strengthening Relationship-based Professional Development delivery skills

- Supporting new CLASS coaches with mentoring
- Supporting the work of professional development advisors
- Using a multi-tiered coaching model to support literacy tutoring
- Using Practice-based Coaching framework to improve school readiness practices of Head Start teachers
- Utilizing child care health consultants to support health and safety in child care settings.

Highlights from 2015 include:

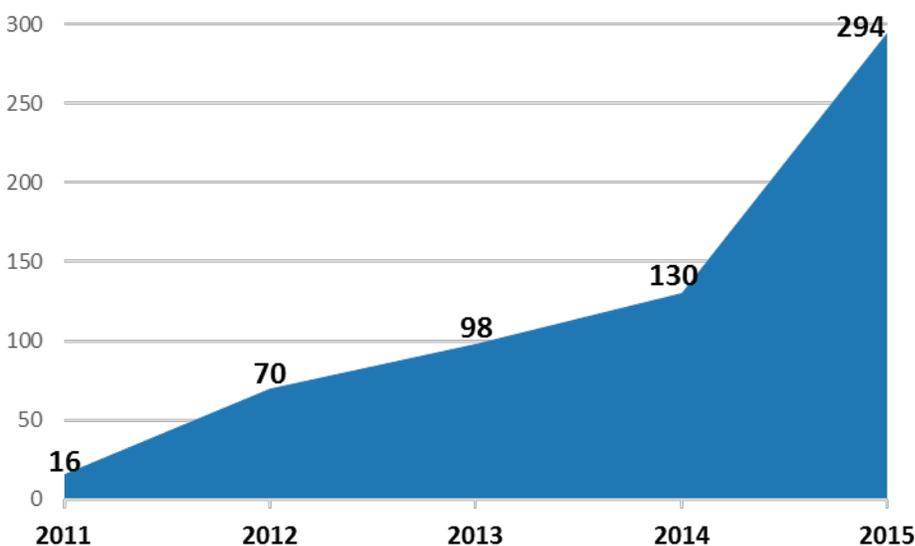
- Parent Aware Quality Coaches documented nearly 7,500 Relationship-based Professional Development events in Develop, nearly 12,000 hours. About half of these events (and hours) can count toward an individual's Career Lattice step.
- Child Care Aware professional development advisors provided individualized support to child care professionals at Parent Aware-participating programs to plan and access professional development needed to reach Parent Aware Star Rating levels.
- Child Care Aware of Minnesota hosted a series of six five-hour workshops across the state for Quality Coaches on Relationship-based Professional Development delivery skills, which 44 coaches attended.
- The Center for Early Education and Development expanded reflective consultation services, which support Parent Aware Quality Coaches, by contracting with five regional consultants to facilitate monthly, in-person consultation sessions.
- During the second half of 2015, 20 early educators received technical assistance and 25 received in-depth advising from Child Care Aware of Minnesota before applying for the Child Development Associate credential.
- Child care health consultants in rural Transformation Zones worked to maintain and expand working relationships with child care providers. The consultants documented more than 230 points of contact to provide technical assistance and answer questions related to child health and safety.
- The Minnesota Head Start Association's health literacy intervention reached about 1,400 families with health literacy information. In a survey administered three months after the program ended, 87 percent reported referencing their copy of *What to Do When Your Child Gets Sick* book, which helps reduce non-urgent visits to the emergency room.
- Thirty-one Child Care Aware of Minnesota CLASS coaches and 13 Head Start CLASS coaches participated in the CLASS Coaching mentorship program, a collaboration between the two

organizations. Participation of CLASS coaches increased by more than 40 percent since 2015.

- Eighteen providers received full-support services and one-on-one mentoring from the Minnesota Licensed Family Child Care Association to meet the National Association for Family Child Care Accreditation standards.
- During its final full programmatic year, the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children (MnAEYC) Child Care Accreditation project provided approximately 994 hours of on-site consultation, adding to the 16,851 hours since the program began.
- The Minnesota Reading Corps and Think Small partnered on a pilot to promote literacy in family child care homes in the Minneapolis Northside Achievement Zone, the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood and surrounding communities. Sixteen family child care providers participated in the pilot and received early literacy training. As a result, the Minnesota Reading Corps expanded its capacity to five tutors.
- Nine Head Start programs completed the Practice-based Coaching Academies. The purpose of the academies is to support systemic decisions about professional development and coaching as a Head Start program team, inclusive of policies, preparation and processes.
- More than 370 early care staff and education providers, who serve 408 children across 97 early care and education programs, participated in the Inclusion Coaching program to help ensure children with special needs receive high-quality, appropriate care from knowledgeable providers.
- The number of child care centers reaching candidacy for accreditation with the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children (MnAEYC) has increased every year since awarding of the Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant in 2011, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. The number of child care centers reaching candidacy for accreditation has increased every year since 2011

Two hundred and thirty-four child care centers reached candidacy for accreditation with the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children in 2015.



Technology and Data Systems

Three initiatives were undertaken in 2015 to improve the quality of technology and data systems used to support professional development. These initiatives have two goals, aiming to:

- Assist practitioners in using technology to enhance professional development
- Improve the quality and quantity of data collected about the workforce and supports offered.

The three initiatives under the topic of technology and data systems in 2015 were:

- Increasing access to Develop, Minnesota's Quality Improvement and Registry Tool
- Including training events offered by school districts, charter schools and Head Start programs in Develop
- Developing an online version of the Individual Training Needs Assessment.

Progress from 2015 includes:

- More than 8,900 early learning and school-age care professionals had active memberships in Develop (which includes all individuals who submitted applications in 2015, and those who applied in 2014 and remained active in 2015), is up by 35 percent from 2014.

- More than 2,000 direct care programs, including half of all licensed child care centers, and 10 percent of licensed family child care providers in the state, have claimed organizational accounts in Develop.
- Work began to integrate Eager to Learn and MNStreams (Child Care Aware of Minnesota's data system for registering for face-to-face trainings) into Develop. This will create a seamless user experience and has already resulted in increased use.
- The Minnesota Department of Human Services and Minnesota Center for Professional Development worked with Head Start programs, school districts and state agencies to become registered Training Sponsor Organizations in Develop. This designation expedites course approval and removes barriers to fully participating in Develop.
- The Minnesota Department of Human Services began a contract with a grantee to develop a bank of questions for an Individual Training Needs Assessment for each content area in the updated Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Challenges Facing the Great Workforce

While efforts to build and support a Great Workforce evolve over time, there are still persistent challenges limiting the growth and increased professionalization of the field. During discussions that informed this report, participants identified a number of continual, structural challenges for those offering support and training, and for direct care providers and educators who seek professional development.

Challenges for Professional Development Providers

Participants identified several challenges facing those working to build and support the workforce, especially related to the wide range of topic needs and education levels. While the traditional definition of the workforce had been focused primarily on those working directly with children, the increase in professional development and support opportunities has expanded that definition to include trainers, coaches, mentors and adult educators. Just as it is important that practitioners have access to appropriate, quality supports, it is equally important to ensure that those providing training and support are of high quality and have fully developed the competencies they support.

The array of career paths that professionals can pursue, each with its own specific specialty areas and skillsets, and the spectrum of educational attainment among individuals in the various positions, can create challenges for professional development providers. A workforce with a range of education backgrounds requires a range of trainings – both by topic and level – to meet needs. This, and the reality that Minnesota has a large number of training and professional development providers, creates challenges ensuring that the state is meeting the needs of professionals at all levels.

In addition to the wide variety of training types and levels needed to support professionals at all levels is the reality that the workforce is vulnerable to changing professional development requirements. Changes in policies, regulations or funding sources may require professionals to attend particular trainings or spend a specific amount of time on training or professional development, which may shift the demand for professional development. A recent example is the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant in late 2014, which created new requirements for trainings and licensing, with a particular focus on health and safety training requirements. These new requirements apply not only to licensed child care programs, but to programs that are license exempt or legally non-licensed as well, which is a significant change.

Challenges for Potential Professional Development Participants

While opportunities for professional development and related activities are increasing and expanding across the state, some practitioners continue to encounter challenges. 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 an example, early learning professions often offer low compensation. Professional development does not always increase pay due to the market-driven nature of 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.

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 providers, 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 these workforce retention challenges, the drive to go through professional development can be lower in comparison with someone with long-term plans to remain in the field.

Recommendations: Opportunities and Direction for Future Work

During the many conversations that informed this report, stakeholders acknowledged ongoing discussions about and agreement on many central challenges facing the workforce, especially as described previously. The following recommendations address areas commonly cited as opportunities for improvement requiring actionable strategies. While the recommendations provide general guidance for the direction of future work, they rely heavily on stakeholders for detailed planning and execution.

Work to Improve Perceptions of Professionalism of Early Care and Education Providers

As discussed previously, there are several persistent factors which lead to the perception that work in early care and education is not a professional career path. Unfortunately, according to stakeholders, this perception can be prevalent among those working in the field, as well as the general public. When practitioners do not see themselves as being fully professional, it can reduce incentives or the internal motivation to participate in professional development opportunities. While many of the initiatives that build and support the Great Workforce aim to expand and improve on professional development opportunities available to practitioners, it is equally important that they, too, continue to promote the corresponding career paths as fully professional.

Pursue Financial Incentives for Recruiting and Retaining Professionals in the Workforce

An opportunity exists to build the value and status of the profession through increasing financial incentives and supports available to those in the workforce. The most cited challenges to building and supporting the workforce are related to low compensation and a lack of guaranteed return on investments towards professional development. These challenges can be addressed by pursuing grants and scholarships that will directly benefit practitioners. State agencies and institutions of higher education can pursue resources for education or loan forgiveness programs to offset the high cost of higher education. Partners can continue to promote currently available supports to build stability in the great workforce, such as the T.E.A.C.H. scholarships and R.E.E.T.A.I.N. bonuses, which give workers a reason to remain in the field. State agencies, in partnership with other

organizations working to strengthen the early care and education workforce, should also explore sustainable options for increasing wages for the full workforce.

Remove Barriers and Provide Supports for Those Interested in Pursuing and Progressing Toward Formal Credentials and Degrees

To fully support recruitment and retention, it is critical to provide clear pathways to formal credentials and degrees. One successful example of this includes having community-based clock hour training formally recognized as contributing towards a Child Development Associate. While having a Child Development Associate be articulated for credit towards a two-year degree, and having two-year degrees add credit towards a four-year degree happens in some cases, an opportunity exists to advance Articulation Agreements more universally. At all levels of entry, professionals must have clear pathways and limited barriers to advancing in their careers. With the potentially high financial costs and time required to complete professional development programs, clear articulation and progression pathways will help to reduce duplication in efforts and support momentum for advancement, where desired.

Prioritize Addressing the Needs of Early Care and Education Providers and the Professionals Who Support Them in Rural Areas

While recruitment and retention of quality professionals is a challenge throughout Minnesota, shortages in providers working directly with children, as well as the network of professionals who support them, are particularly pronounced in rural areas. In some areas, it can be nearly impossible to find child care options, especially for infants and toddlers. Those who do provide early child care and education in rural areas face challenges accessing professional development, including infrequent offerings, long travel times, or potential cancellations due to low enrollments. Lack of or poor quality internet access are barriers to participation in online training and coursework. Because of this, state agencies and partners should strategically target efforts to support rural providers.

One example of progress in this area from 2015 was seen with the expansion of the Center for Early Education and Development's Reflective Consultation program for Parent Aware Quality Coaches. CEED increased the number of consultants to five, who are based regionally around the state. The increase in online training offerings through Anytime Learning is helping to reduce barriers related to location and transportation; at the beginning of 2015, Anytime Learning offered nine online modules, which expanded to 26 by the end of the year, including offerings in Somali, Hmong and

Spanish. Stakeholders should continue to pursue opportunities to reduce barriers for rural providers to access professional development, which may include expanding one-on-one coaching and outreach.

Strengthen Coordination among Stakeholders and Partners

When collecting data to inform this report, stakeholders recognized that silos among agencies working on parallel efforts still exist. Limited information sharing may lead to duplicated efforts or gaps in service needs when there are assumptions about what other organizations are or are not working on. It can also be confusing for practitioners in the field as they attempt to navigate a complicated patchwork of training and professional development opportunities.

One opportunity for improved coordination is among state agencies and the state's institutes of higher education. While state agencies and institutes of higher education both work to connect current and potential early learning program professionals with the training and education needed to be successful, there are very few direct lines of funding or contracted work to help coordinate efforts. One example of coordination from 2015 includes a grant opportunity offered by the Minnesota Department of Education, supported by the Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant, to embed the updated Minnesota Knowledge and Competency Framework into two- and four-year higher education curricula. Work on these efforts will begin in 2016, and may create a pathway for Articulation Agreements among two- and four-year programs.

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 between two- and four-year higher education programs, while the growth of practitioners with degrees will increase professionalization of the field.

Appendix A: Initiative Descriptions and Progress From 2015

Initiatives Related to Knowledge and Competency Framework Efforts

Because Minnesota has multiple sets of expectations for the skills and knowledge early educators should demonstrate, it can be challenging for providers to understand the different expectations and which ones apply to them. In 2015, two initiatives worked towards establishing a single set of expectations for educators and creating a clear path for educational advancement, including:

- Creating a Knowledge and Competency Framework for early childhood educators and providers
- Establishing Articulation Agreements within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system.

Creating a Knowledge and Competency Framework for Early Childhood Educators and Providers

Key Goal

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

The Minnesota Board of Teaching standards describe expectations about the knowledge needed by licensed teachers working in early childhood education settings. Minnesota's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Education and Care Practitioners (2004) describe the skills and abilities needed to work effectively with young learners. This initiative works to align Minnesota's 2004 Core Competencies with the Board of Teaching standards in user-friendly knowledge and competency frameworks. Frameworks may inform credit and non-credit professional development, based on specialty area. Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant funding made this initiative possible.

2015 Progress

The Knowledge and Competency Frameworks (KCF) combining the Board of Teaching standards and field-developed competencies were released in December 2014, available on the Minnesota Department of Education's website. These documents identify the skills needed to demonstrate competencies at three levels: Explores, implements and designs and leads. Progress between levels depends on the professionals' skills, rather than solely their level of education. Teachers and providers will be able to use these documents to map their own professional development and education.

In 2015, companion guides were developed for the preschool and family child care versions of the KCF. The guides are based on the Infant/Toddler Caregiver Companion Guide to Minnesota Core Competencies written by the Center for Early Education and Development in 2010. These guides provide key concepts in plain language, examples of strategies, and stories of how professionals can demonstrate competencies in various settings.

The Knowledge and Competency Frameworks are being introduced to trainers, faculty at institutes of higher education, educators and providers. The Minnesota Department of Human Services is working with contractors to align training records in Develop with the new Framework, and to prepare trainers to use the KCF as a foundation for training. Minnesota Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (MnAECTE) and Access have endorsed the KCF and are working on ways to deeply embed these new documents in their teacher preparation programs.

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

2015 Progress

Faculty members from Minnesota two- and four-year programs have continued to meet to develop trust and become more familiar with each other's challenges and strengths. As of 2015, faculty have been unable to draft statewide Articulation Agreements for a variety of external reasons. However, the Minnesota Department of Education, through Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant funding, made two grant opportunities available to support this work. One grant provides funding to embed the Minnesota Knowledge and Competency Framework into the two- and four-year curricula. This scaffolding may allow the two groups to create a pathway to articulation. Work funded by these grants, which were awarded in 2015, will begin in 2016. A grant to the Minnesota Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (MnAECTE) and Access will allow conversations with the Board of Teaching to take place in 2016 to arrive at an understanding of priorities.

Initiatives Related to Training and Trainer Development

In 2015, 19 initiatives contributed to working towards training and trainer development. These initiatives worked toward the goals of expanding the variety and improving the quality of trainings and trainers available to early educators. These initiatives included:

- Building consensus around best practices for coaching
- Developing a cadre of trainers to train on assessment and curriculum tools
- Developing a tribal trainer approval process
- Developing additional Parent Aware training content
- Development of training modules on authentic assessment
- Educating and supporting teachers and administrators on implementation of full-day kindergarten and pre-kindergarten through grade three systems
- Expanding the pool of bilingual and bicultural trainers
- Expanding training for professionals who serve young children with disabilities
- Expanding training offered via Eager to Learn
- Expanding training on early childhood screening
- Growing the capacity of Minnesota's early childhood mental health network
- Improving the Minnesota Center for Professional Development's process for ensuring quality of trainers and trainings
- Supporting child care providers who serve homeless children
- Supporting the public child welfare workforce
- Training child care providers on the Child and Adult Care Food program
- Training library staff to offer early literacy workshops to parents and child care providers
- Training professionals on administering Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE) tests
- Training on the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs)
- Training teachers on administration of kindergarten entry assessments.

Building Consensus Around Best Practices for Coaching

Key Goal

Bring organizations together that are either employing coaches or using coaching in their practice and programs to gain consensus on key coaching components, and the supports needed for a sustainable coaching effort across sectors.

Many of the organizations that provide professional development to the early care and education workforce have unique and individualized models for implementing coaching in their programs. However, in many cases, provider sites may be participating in two or more programs simultaneously with the same coach. This has created challenges for coaches to incorporate and consolidate information in a way that maintains fidelity of implementation to the intended model, while communicating content for teachers in an integrated way. This initiative includes engaging major professional development organizations in a process aimed at gaining consensus on a foundational coaching process, regardless of the specialized content, to reduce challenges for coaches.

2015 Progress

In 2015, the Minnesota Departments of Education and Human Services coordinated meetings to review organizational and personnel-related goals for a foundational coaching process. Incorporating reports on Relationship-based Professional Development scans from the University of Minnesota, partners then identified common threads among the multiple coaching models in practice and came to consensus on supporting the Practice-based Coaching framework. Department partners then initiated support and partnerships with the Region V Training and Technical Assistance network for Head Start providers to provide Practice-based Coaching training to cross-sector coaches. These cross-sector coaches include Parent Aware Quality Coaches, CLASS coaches, School Readiness program coaches, Head Start coaches and other partners. The Practice-based Coaching training is scheduled for spring and summer 2016.

Developing a Cadre of Trainers to Train on Assessment and Curriculum Tools

Key Goal

With support from stakeholder groups, develop a regionalized cadre of trainers to provide low-cost trainings on assessment and curriculum tools.

The Minnesota Departments of Education and Human Services are working collaboratively to increase the number of trainers for multiple assessment and curriculum tools based on demand and instrument quality. A broad group of stakeholders conducted a need assessment related to trainings on assessment tools and identified that there was little capacity to train providers on specific tools. From that, the departments began working together to avoid duplication and coordinate training of trainers for the most popular assessment and curriculum tools. Tools include Teaching Strategies Gold; Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos; Creative Curriculum–Preschool Foundations; Creative Curriculum for Family Child Care; Desired Results Development Profile; Brigance Inventory of Early Development; Formative Assessment System for Teachers; and Classroom Assessment Scoring System. The Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant funded this effort.

2015 Progress

The Minnesota Departments of Education and Human Services worked to convene a group of 11 training organizations as stakeholders to coordinate and implement this effort. Together, they identified the most popular curriculum and assessment tools in the state, worked to develop a set of criteria for identifying high-quality trainers, and recruited trainers to go through the training with publishers of the tools. In 2015, the Formative Assessment System and Teachers and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System were added to the list of tools. Eleven new trainers went through the training process for these two tools. Between 2014 and the end of 2015, trainers completed 60 trainings.

The Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant continued to subsidize the cost of training these trainers. Trainers trained through this process are able to offer training to cross-sector audiences and will continue to train kindergarten teachers on Minnesota has revised Kindergarten Entry Assessment in spring 2016.

Developing a Tribal Trainer Approval Process

Key Goals

Build a pool of cultural trainers in each tribal reservation and the Twin Cities metro area to meet the unique cultural training needs of Minnesota's tribal communities.

Support Native American children and families through culturally appropriate training methods.

The Minnesota Center of Professional Development (MNCPD) has been working to expand the pool of quality trainings and trainers, and to make training more available and appropriate for those served. The MNCPD approval process has relied closely on formal coursework and training records, but did not have a pathway for recognizing the Native American tradition for knowledge sharing, which relies heavily on verbal information sharing. In this initiative, Minnesota Tribal Resources for Early Childhood Care (MNTRECC) has partnered with MNCPD to develop a pathway for tribal trainer approval, which will be respectful of Native American elders and knowledge keepers, and the traditional teaching methods for passing knowledge to younger generations.

2015 Progress

In 2015, MNTRECC and the Minnesota Department of Human Services completed a years-long process of developing a draft of the Cultural Trainer and Training Approval Process Guidebook. Using this draft, MNTRECC began piloting use of tribal trainers in the Mille Lacs and Leech Lake tribal communities.

The pilot processes began by convening local area committees, which include early childhood professionals and elders from the community, to create by-laws and help plan the goal areas to address in the pilots. These goal areas will help to guide the search for cultural trainers. In both pilots, the revitalization of language is a stated goal. The two pilots will help to inform changes or updates to the Cultural Trainer and Training Approval Guidebook and expansion to additional tribal communities. Early on, the pilots helped to identify varying expectations for using technology in trainer approval; in this case, the MNCPD and MNTRECC collaborated to work around barriers related to limited access to technology in some tribal communities.

In September 2015, representatives from MNTRECC and Department of Human Services presented at the National Indian Child Care Association Conference in Washington, D.C., to share information about Minnesota's process and experiences with other states.

Developing Additional Parent Aware Training Content

Key Goals:

Develop Parent Aware trainings that are comprehensive and inclusive for all who participate. Incorporate practice and reflection into the structure of Parent Aware trainings.

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

With the Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant, the Minnesota Department of Human Services contracted with the Center for Early Education and Development to adapt the 54 hours of Parent Aware foundational training requirements into Spanish, Somali and Hmong. It is also developing 108 new hours of advanced trainings. With the exception of a two-hour training on the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress, all trainings are series-based with a model that divides course time into content learning, reflection and practical application of skills in work settings.

2015 Progress

In total, 20 advanced, series-based courses were developed to meet all Parent Aware training requirements, totaling 108 hours of trainings. The curriculum reflects the new Knowledge and Competency Frameworks, which were released in December 2014.

These trainings will be offered in early 2016, which is slightly later than anticipated, due to editing. When released, all 20 courses will be offered in both traditional face-to-face classroom settings and online synchronous courses.

Development of Training Modules on Authentic Assessment

Key Goal

Develop an effective professional development infrastructure to promote the use of authentic assessment by early educators.

The Center for Early Education and Development has developed authentic assessment training modules for 12 topic areas identified by early educators. CEED conducted a survey of family-and center-based providers, early childhood school-based services, Head Start and professional development providers and collaborated with the Minnesota Departments of Education and Human Services to identify topic areas. When completed, all in-person training modules will include one-third content, one-third skill development and one-third reflection. Each module includes multiple activities and video content to share concrete examples of how to implement quality authentic assessment practices in all early care and education environments. Training modules are available to practitioners online; several are available in Spanish.

2015 Progress

In early 2015, most of the 12 in-person authentic assessment-training modules were completed and made available to qualified trainers through CEED's online Moodle page. Training of trainers occurred through online meetings during Spring 2015. Originally, CEED had planned on developing eight assessment modules, but as content was being developed, it identified the need to create additional, more advanced modules on authentic assessment.

After CEED made the in-person training modules available, the focus shifted to launching the series of online modules. By the end of the year, family-and center-based providers were able to access eight of the 12 modules online, including five in Spanish.

CEED hosted two training of trainers for each module, usually delivered by the module content developer. CEED collected evaluation data from participating professional development providers, which included a survey immediately after each training and two follow-up surveys three and six months later to explore learning, behavior changes, quality and usefulness. The trainings had 15 and 18 trainers participate; survey feedback was overwhelmingly positive. To continue gathering feedback and facilitating learning, CEED set up chat rooms and discussion boards through Moodle, where trainers can continue to share insights and questions with CEED and each other.

Educating and Supporting Teachers and Administrators on Implementation of Full-day Kindergarten and Pre-kindergarten Through Grade Three Systems

Key Goal

Support effective full-day kindergarten with high-quality instructional practices for teachers, principals and directors of curriculum and instruction, so students can demonstrate achievement and continue their growth in formal schooling.

In the 2014-2015 school year, public schools in Minnesota began offering full-day kindergarten to all students. Since then, more than 99 percent of kindergarten students in public schools and publicly supported charter schools have participated. To help support educators, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) offers a variety of professional development opportunities on instructional practices and effective kindergarten learning environments for kindergarten teachers, elementary school principals and directors of curriculum and instruction. Professional development is facilitated by state and national experts, presents research-based practices for setting a foundation of excellence, and supports academic success for all students in kindergarten and beyond.

2015 Progress

In early 2015, MDE wrapped up a statewide kindergarten teacher survey, which helped to identify current teaching practices and professional development needs. The survey resulted in more than 350 responses; after it was completed, in partnership with the Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC), MDE held a Kindergarten Strategic Planning meeting with key stakeholders to review results and make recommendations for next steps. One recommendation was to develop a series of kindergarten teacher practice briefs; MDE, MWCC and the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) began creating these, which include research-based information on effective kindergarten teaching practices. Practice briefs will be used by local professional learning communities (PLCs), which are a strategy for kindergarten teachers to deepen professional development on key topics by working through scenarios together. Also in 2015, MDE, with national experts, facilitated three pilot virtual PLCs.

In spring 2015, MDE developed and hosted a webinar, “Harnessing Technology and Digital Media to Support Early Literacy” to help promote integrated strategies for early literacy and reading. More than 650 teachers and administrators participated.

In summer 2015, MDE conducted an intensive Kindergarten Teacher Leader Institute to build regional leader capacity on effective full-day kindergarten implementation. The institute focused on child development and brain science, learning environments, learning centers and standards-based classrooms. Participants subsequently provided training to other educators and administrators within their regions about institute content.

In partnership with the Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association (MESPA), MDE began providing a PreK-3 Principal Leadership Series to support leadership and competencies of principals and other administrators in leading early learning in their schools and communities. In 2015, principal-led teams from 65 schools from 12 of the 13 Governors Economic Development Regions attended five day-long sessions. Approximately 250 educators engaged in each of the interactive sessions led by national and state experts. The series was nationally recognized as a key strategy for professional learning and capacity building in New America's [Bringing It All Together: Elementary Principals are Key to Strong PreK-3rd Grade Classrooms](#) report.

In fall 2015, MDE began planning for a 20-week online course for pre-kindergarten to grade three teachers, to be provided in partnership with researchers from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The course, "Building Rigorous and Robust PreK-3 Learning Environments: The Art of Communication in Classrooms for Young Children," will support developing deeper understanding, skills and competencies on effective instructional practices, teaching state standards and formative assessment, and will focus on meeting the learning needs of students of color and those in poverty. Planning also began for four online modules for teachers and administrators on formative assessment for children in kindergarten through grade three. All of these online opportunities will be available in 2016.

MDE released two videos on full-day kindergarten for use in local, regional and statewide professional development. "[The Shift: The Development and Learning of Kindergarten-age Children](#)" video features experts and practitioners. It provides an overview of the most current research on brain development of kindergarten students, and teaching practices to support learning for all students. The "[Administrators Role in Kindergarten Assessment](#)" video was released for use in professional development offerings. Additional professional development videos will be released in 2016.

Expanding the Pool of Bilingual and Bicultural Trainers

Key Goal

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

State partner agencies are 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.

2015 Progress

By 2015, Think Small doubled the number of new bilingual and bicultural trainers from when the baseline was established in 2013. Additional trainers were recruited who speak Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Oromo and Karen.

In 2015, Think Small was able to match new trainers with more experienced Master Trainers who also came through the Bilingual/Bicultural Trainer Project to share successes and experiences serving the bilingual community of providers. This mentorship was successful in offering new trainers the opportunity to shadow and co-train with experienced trainers, which helped to build skills and confidence. The project also created layers of ongoing, targeted supports through closer collaborations with the Minnesota Center for Professional Development to ensure trainers could get through the trainer approval process.

One outcome of the Bilingual/Bicultural Trainer Project has been increased awareness within the network of Child Care Aware professional development advisors about the changing demographics around the state and the need for bilingual and bicultural trainers.

To increase efforts to ensure early childhood providers and educators are meeting the needs of English language learners, the Early Learning Services Division at MDE will collaborate in 2016 with the Division of Federal Programs to align training efforts to the early childhood Wisconsin, Delaware and Arkansas (WIDA) standards. The training will be a train-the-trainer event consisting of three in-person dates and four webinars, with homework required. The training will prepare approximately 30 trainers from all sectors of the field, to train on the WIDA English Language Development Standards. Attendees agree to provide a minimum of two trainings in Minnesota on WIDA standards in the following 12 months. Trainers cover the entire state and, once they have

completed the training, their contact information is on the MDE website for districts and programs looking for WIDA training. In addition to the 30 participants, there will be approximately five to seven MDE staff from early learning and school support.

Expanding Training for Professionals Who Serve Young Children with Disabilities

Key Goals

Build and support needed skills and knowledge in professionals who serve young children with disabilities to increase the probability that these children and their families achieve positive outcomes.

Collaborate with local programs to provide needed supports throughout the state.

Through the Minnesota Centers of Excellence for Young Children with Disabilities (CoE), Early Childhood Special Education professional development facilitators work in regions throughout the state. The regional facilitators establish relationships with local early childhood program leaders, and coordinate professional development for providers working with children with disabilities from birth to age 5. Professional development facilitators and programs work in three innovation areas:

- Pyramid (social/emotional focus)
- Family-guided, routines-based interventions (home visiting focus)
- Classroom Engagement Model (inclusive classroom focus).

Specific professional development content within each innovation includes evidence-informed practices, practice-based coaching and child development, and meets the intended outcomes of legislative efforts to support young children with disabilities and their families. All innovations address the cultural and linguistic diversity of children and families in Minnesota. Targeted training is arranged regionally to inform and educate providers who work with young children with disabilities and their families about the specific innovation that was selected by their program.

2015 Progress

Local programs throughout the state continued to use the initial information they gathered from the INSPIRE ACTION self-assessment tool to focus on areas of program strengths and needs. The support of the CoE focused around creating, collecting and coordinating resources and materials to be used in local programs to address identified needs. Professional development facilitators have scheduled routine contact with each local early childhood special education leader to ensure ongoing needs are addressed.

If a local program has determined that, it has identified a need and has appropriate readiness and staff buy-in, the CoE staff work to install one of the three identified innovations mentioned above. Installation work is grounded in the frameworks of Active Implementation Science and is

supported over a five-year period. Programs are given opportunities to enter into fiscal contracts with the Minnesota Department of Education where funds are provided on a decelerating schedule over the course of the five years. These funds are provided to ensure sustaining and scaling efforts are underway within each program using a new evidence-informed practice. In the 2015-2016 school year, 17 programs were actively collaborating with the CoE on such work.

Expanding Training Offered Via Eager to Learn

Key Goals

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

Facilitate completion of the Minnesota Child Care credential, NAEYC Director's credential and the Child Development Associate credential.

Child Care Aware of Minnesota offers a community-based, e-learning program for early learning and school-age care providers called Eager to Learn. Research supporting the online learning model informs course structure, which brings people together through technology. Students take trainings individually, and the larger programs (which include the Child Development Associate, Minnesota Child Care credential, Director's credential and Spanish-language courses) put attendees into learning communities. The Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant funded an upgrade to the learning platform, which made the online interface more user-friendly.

2015 Progress

Legislation went into effect in 2014 that changed licensing requirements for family child care providers. These changes increased the annual training time required for licensure from eight to 16 hours. It also now requires providers to complete specific training curricula on behavior guidance, supervising for safety, abusive head trauma and sudden unexpected infant death.

In 2015, Eager to Learn hosted 299 courses to help meet the increased demand from the 2014 legislation. These courses included 60 on Anytime Learning, Child Care Aware of Minnesota's online learning platform that provides modules and interactive trainings for students to take on their own. In total, the 60 courses had more than 16,000 students (many students participated in multiple Anytime Learning courses), and the 239 traditional Eager to Learn courses were attended more than 2,800 times.

Expanding Training on Early Childhood Screening

Key Goal

Ensure that those responsible for conducting early childhood screenings in Minnesota understand the purpose, state requirements, and recommended practices of health and developmental screenings.

The Minnesota Departments of Education and Health provide training to early childhood screening coordinators and screening staff on required components of early childhood screening. Staff from MDH's Child and Teen Check-up program provide in-person training on hearing and vision screening for screening staff and nurses, and makes hearing and vision screening procedures manuals and other resources available to support evidence-based and effective screening practices.

The departments also work together to develop training content on the importance of early childhood screening for service providers who serve families with young children, and for providers who help connect families to early childhood screening programs. Under the Minnesota Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant, the Minnesota Departments of Education, Health and Human Services are collaborating to develop additional training strategies to support public screening programs that perform developmental and social-emotional screenings. These screening providers include local public health, health care providers, mental health providers, school district staff, Head Start and Early Head Start and child welfare.

2015 Progress

With funding from the Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant, the Minnesota Departments of Education and Health worked to make early childhood developmental and social–emotional screening available online. The departments piloted online trainings for developmental and social-emotional screenings with 11 community sites, including school districts, Head Start, public health and primary care. The pilot included one face-to-face meeting and monthly webinars or technical assistance calls. Pilot partners screened 500 children between August and December 2015; the project was extended through December 2016.

Throughout the year, the Minnesota Departments of Education and Health co-trained community partners on the importance of early childhood screening in conjunction with other training opportunities, upon request. Staff from these departments and the Minnesota Department of Human Services continues to plan for delivery of ongoing and enhanced training activities to support public programs that perform developmental and social-emotional screenings, referrals and follow-through for young children.

Growing the Capacity of Minnesota's Early Childhood Mental Health Network

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, and provide 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, has contracted with 20 mental health agencies across the state, as well as 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 between birth and age 5 who are uninsured or underinsured. Professionals provide services in a child's home, mental health clinics, primary care offices, child care sites and schools.

2015 Progress

The initial Early Childhood grants, which the Children's Mental Health Division issued to clinicians, concluded June 30, 2015. These grants, which began in July 2011, supported 65 clinicians in becoming certified in Trauma-informed Child Parent Psychotherapy. Additionally, 16 clinicians became in-agency trainers for Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), a parent-child treatment which builds parent-child relationships. Fifty clinicians were trained in PCIT and 32 were trained in the Incredible Years Parenting curriculum.

Throughout its four-year span, the initial Early Childhood grants served more than 3,200 children, age birth to 4, in 82 of 87 counties. Seventy-two percent of children served were enrolled in Minnesota health care programs, including Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare. Nearly one-quarter of children served by the grants received evidence-based treatment in Trauma-informed Child Parent Psychotherapy or Parent Child Interaction Therapy. Sixty percent of services provided by the grants were outside of clinical settings, including in families' home, child care, primary care offices, or other non-clinic locations.

With the conclusion of the initial Early Childhood grants, Department of Human Services re-issued a request for proposals for early childhood mental health grantees beginning July 1, 2016. In 2015, 21 grantees were selected to receive grant funding; these grantees cover 27 different mental health agencies and will serve all 87 counties and two tribal communities.

Improving the Minnesota Center for Professional Development's Process for Ensuring the Quality of Trainers and Trainings

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 (MNCPD) administers an approval process for both trainers and courses (training curricula) to ensure a standard of quality. Individuals seeking approval as trainers submit an online application in Develop. After completing the application online, applicants submit a variety of documentation to MNCPD, which verifies the information reported in the online application. MNCPD registry specialists review the documentation and process the application in accordance with the "MNCPD Trainer Approval Guide." A similar process is in place for submitting courses for approval by MNCPD. Approved trainers can submit an online course approval request in Develop. MNCPD reviews and processes courses for approval in accordance with the "MNCPD Course Approval Guide." Once a course is approved, approved trainers and training sponsor organizations can create events, or instances, of the course offering in Develop. Events scheduled in Develop are MNCPD approved and attendance will be documented on individual learning records, creating a real time record of completed professional development for practitioners.

2015 Progress

The Minnesota Department of Human Services convened a Trainer Type Advisory Committee consisting of a cross sector of early childhood professionals and adult educators. The advisory group utilized the MNCPD-authored report, "Using Trainer Approval as a Strategy for Improving Early Childhood Practices" and other scholarly publications on the topic to guide the group's work. The goal of the advisory group was to streamline the number of trainer types in Minnesota while upholding a standard of professional knowledge and competency within the trainer approval process. MNCPD took many steps in 2015 to revisit, review and revise policies and procedures related to trainer and course approval. MNCPD adopted a bi-annual policy update, "Policy Currents," which was released to the public and distributed to members via email. By adhering to a schedule for policy changes, MNCPD aims to minimize confusion and provide transparent, accurate communication on a predictable basis. Both 2015 editions, as well as other recourses, are at www.mncpd.org.

In 2015, MNCPD's duties were amended to remove providing direct support to trainers. The Minnesota Department of Human Services, through a competitive RFP, awarded a new grant to

Child Care Aware of Minnesota charged with providing direct support to trainers moving forward. This allows the two grantees to provide strategic, targeted support services to trainers in a clear, coordinated way.

MNCPD implemented monthly continuous quality improvement investigations in 2015, identifying areas for concentrated focus and strength of the organization. Accuracy, processing speed, and volume of work have all been examined through these investigations. In December 2015, MNCPD processed 1,052 online applications, up 50 percent from the 527 processed in January 2015.

Supporting Child Care Providers Who Serve Homeless Children

Key Goals

Support child care providers to identify and best serve homeless children and their families.

Propose a system for providing training and technical assistance to child care providers serving homeless children and their families.

As a new requirement established with reauthorization of the federal Child Care Development Fund plan, state agencies must provide training and technical assistance to child care providers who serve families and children experiencing homelessness. To help meet this requirement and ensure that homeless children and families are being served appropriately, the Minnesota Department of Human Services established a cross-sector advisory committee with representatives from nonprofit organizations, service providers and state government agencies, to develop training materials and a delivery system to achieve these goals.

2015 Progress

In 2015, the Homeless Advisory Group was established to begin working towards the training and technical assistance goals set in the Child Care Development Fund plan. To begin its work, the advisory group developed a list of topics that will need to be included in the training. With this list, the Minnesota Department of Human Services identified and contracted with an expert to develop the training. The curriculum writer was added as a member of the Homeless Advisory Group to help prioritize the initially developed list of topics.

In fall 2015, as required by the federal government, there was a public hearing about the Child Care Development Fund plan, through which the Homeless Advisory Group received feedback that it should include additional representation by people who work directly with homeless families and children. Accordingly, three new members, all of whom work directly with homeless families, joined the group.

From there, the expanded Homeless Advisory Group began creating a plan for developing the training and creating a system of offering technical assistance to child care providers. This process began with brainstorming of existing training and organizations that work with families who are homeless and could provide technical assistance to child care providers to help explore options and create a seamless process of offering training and providing technical assistance. In 2016, the group will work to establish the training and technical assistance system.

Supporting the Public Child Welfare Workforce

Key Goal

To prepare, train and support the public child welfare workforce, including social workers, supervisors, resource families and tribes.

The Minnesota Child Welfare Training System is a part of the Child Safety and Permanency Division, Minnesota Department of Human Services, which works to develop and coordinate trainings for the state's child welfare workforce. Trainings cover three levels:

1. Foundation trainings which are mandated for all new child protection workers
2. Ongoing and advanced social work trainings for those working in child welfare who wish to advance in the field or stay up to date on current best practices, and
3. For resource parents (including foster and potential adoptive parents).

2015 Progress

The Minnesota Child Welfare Training System worked closely with the Foster Parent College to develop a pilot for an online version of the pre-service training for licensed foster care providers. Currently, this 12-session training is only available in-person, which may potentially create barriers related to scheduling and transportation. In addition to creating an online platform for some training content, the pilot also worked to create local customization to the in-person content, and update trainings to help ensure foster parents are equipped with the most current information.

The Minnesota Child Welfare Training System also collaborated with the Child Development Services Division, Minnesota Department of Human Services, to begin working on a customized version of the Infant/Toddler credential, which was originally developed by the University of Minnesota's Center for Early Education and Development for child care providers and foster care parents. In 2016, the first cohort of foster care parents will participate in the pilot of the updated credential, available online through Eager to Learn.

The Minnesota Child Welfare Training System established a work group to address recommendations on child welfare training reform that were identified by Governor Dayton's Task Force on the Protection of Children in 2015. One of the major accomplishments of this work group was development of a statewide set of competencies for child welfare workers. These competencies include statements about the knowledge and skills child welfare workers need related to childhood development, and understanding trauma and maltreatment. The work group will continue to engage early childhood development experts as it continues to reform child welfare training during 2016.

Training Child Care Providers on the Child and Adult Care Food Program Trainings

Key Goal

Train early childhood providers and practitioners working in family child care homes and child care centers on the skills necessary to operate the Child and Adult Care Food Program, resulting in nutritious and high-quality meals for children and behaviors that model and provide nutrition education.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides funding to child care centers and family child care homes to improve access to food and offers a healthful diet for children in child care settings through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The CACFP is administered through the Minnesota Department of Education and provides financial reimbursement for meals and snacks that meet CACFP requirements. MDE staff in the division of Nutrition, Health and Youth Development administer training and provide technical assistance to staff in schools, public, tribal, nonprofit and for-profit organizations regarding CACFP operations, administration and healthy eating behaviors. CACFP training opportunities can contribute to continuing education credits for child care licensing, are free, and offered in a variety of online and in-person venues.

2015 Progress

MDE added five e-learning modules to the CACFP training library of more than 40 modules including:

- Three online training videos to encourage positive eating environments in child care settings based on the Smarter Lunchroom trainings from Cornell University
- A menu planning module
- Special diets module
- Three program-specific modules, and
- A lively video illustrating Farm to Preschool in Minnesota around nutrition education, gardening and forming partnerships with local farmers.

Team Nutrition Training (TNT), a two-year competitive training grant dedicated to unique training strategies focused on nutrition education, provides a significant contribution to nutrition education for CACFP programs in Minnesota. In 2015, work began to include development and publication of training modules and resources on meal patterns, menu strategies, Smarter Mealtime implementation for centers and home providers, as well as use of existing national TNT-developed resources. This content is expected to be completed in 2016.

A Child and Adult Care Food Program Nutrition and Wellness Advisory Group was created in 2014 and continued to meet regularly in 2015 to bring together state partners and stakeholders in early learning to strategize on how to best deliver trainings, share successful strategies for facilitating trainings, and create common messaging. A training subgroup released a skill development list for early childhood providers and practitioners aligned with best practice recommendations. This list is being used in curriculum development and training of key skills by the state agency and partners. As a result of this partnership group, three free nutrition online workshops were developed during 2015 and posted, which can contribute to provider's continuing education as additional licensing credits.

Training Library Staff to Offer Early Literacy Workshops to Parents and Child Care Providers

Key Goal

Prepare Minnesota library staff to provide quality storytimes, literacy-rich playful learning spaces, and strengthen outreach and education for parents and care providers that incorporates the most up-to-date early literacy research and findings.

The Every Child Ready to Read® curriculum from the Public Library Association and the Association for Library Services to Children teaches parents about early literacy skill development. In partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education's Early Learning Division, State Library Services developed training sessions to align the second edition of Every Child Ready to Read® (ECRR2) with the Language and Literacy Development domain of Minnesota's Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs). Minnesota's public libraries offer thousands of programs for young children and their families each year. These trainings and newly aligned curriculum help libraries to incorporate the ECIPs into early childhood programming. Librarians were also trained to present an early literacy course based on ECRR2 to child care providers for credit towards their Parent Aware Star Rating. A Library Services and Technology Act grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services made the project possible.

2015 Progress

State Library Services facilitated six trainings on ECRR2 for library staff to learn a range of ways to help parents and caregivers build reading readiness. These trainings included four six-hour sessions on "Storytimes for Everyone," and two training of trainers for librarians.

The "Storytimes for Everyone" trainings included content on enhancing story time with early literacy best practices. Participants learned how to effectively introduce, model and put into practice activities that build early literacy skills, and how to create engaging prompts that encourage parents and children to sing, talk, play, write and read in the library and at home. Seventy-four librarians attended in St. Cloud, Bemidji, Mankato or North Branch. In a post-training survey, participants reported significant increases in knowledge and confidence in using new practices.

In 2015, State Library Services, Early Learning, Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Center for Professional Development collaborated to approve the ECRR2 training of trainers and the two-hour course, "Talk, Sing, Read, Write, Play...Everyday: Supporting Early Literacy through Intentional Interaction." The training of trainers sessions were offered in St. Cloud and White

Bear Lake. Nineteen librarians successfully became approved trainers to deliver a two-hour early literacy course that child care providers can use to meet Parent Aware training requirements.

Training on Administering Otoacoustic Emissions Tests

Key Goal

Create a robust system of trained professionals to provide timely access to otoacoustic emissions testing for children.

Measuring otoacoustic emissions (OAE) is a method of initial screening for possible hearing loss in children from birth until school age. In this initiative, a cross-sector team of professionals, including Head Start programs, audiologists, deaf and hard of hearing teachers, early childhood speech and language teachers and school nurses, are working to increase training on how to do the tests. This team is working in early Head Starts and Early Childhood Special Education programs so children can get timely access to these screenings.

2015 Progress

In late 2014, the cross-sector team working on this initiative received a grant from the Early Childhood Hearing Outreach Initiative (ECHO) to provide trainings to 11 teams of stakeholders across the state on how to train others to use equipment needed in OAE testing. Since those trainings, through the end of 2015, these teams have provided ongoing consultation and support to local school district leadership and Head Start programs that are initiating OAE screening protocols. They have shared print resources with peer professionals related to the importance of continued hearing screening in young children, data collection, and connection to online OAE hearing screening resources through the national ECHO project.

Members of the Minnesota OAE training teams have provided 26 trainings to groups of Early Childhood Special Education service providers, school nurses and Head Start professionals across Minnesota. By the end of 2015, more than 300 local education and Head Start professionals had participated in these trainings to learn how to use OAE technology to screen hearing in young children.

Also in 2015, work began to develop a pilot project for collecting data on children's pass/refer rates, timelines for completing OAE screening and follow-up, fidelity of OAE screenings, and continued needs for professional development and support. Work also began on sending a repeat survey to all Minnesota Early Childhood Special Education coordinators to help document the hearing status of all young children referred to or receiving Part C Early Intervention or Part B Preschool Special Education services. This survey was initially completed in 2014 (prior to statewide OAE training efforts) and will help document increases in use of OAE technology.

Training on the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress

Key Goal

Ensure equal opportunities for all early care and education professionals to access training on the newly revised Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress.

The Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs) are the set of standards for developmentally appropriate expectations used in Minnesota for children from birth to age 5. There are six domains for the Indicators of Progress, including social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language and literacy development, creativity and the arts, cognitive development, and physical and motor development. As part of the Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant, the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress is being revised, which included input from a cross-section of professionals from across the state. As a complement to the revised Early Childhood Indicators of Progress, an initiative to develop a corresponding set of accessible trainings on the updated indicators is planned for all early care and education professionals.

2015 Progress

The Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota, completed development of trainings for the updated language and literacy development, and social and emotional development, Early Childhood Indicators of Progress. A cross-disciplinary committee of early childhood professionals and national experts updated these domains in 2014.

Two new committees convened in 2015 to start updating the mathematical and logical thinking, and scientific thinking and problem-solving ECIP domains. These committees include approximately eight to 10 people from a variety of settings, led by professionals working in the field. It is expected that updates to these domains will be completed in early 2016.

As part of their training development work, CEED also developed training templates. The templates include electronic and print resources onto which trainers can insert their own content and examples. These training templates are generalizable and, therefore, can be used by trainers to provide trainings on ECIPs as domains are updated in the future.

Training Teachers on Administering Kindergarten Entry Assessments

Key Goal

Be intentional about providing professional development to kindergarten teachers on tools that relate to children's entry status.

Minnesota's Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant included funding to revise Minnesota's school readiness measurement tools through the Minnesota School Readiness Pilot Study, now called the Kindergarten Entry Profile (KEP). Through KEP, the Minnesota Department of Education provides support to a sample of districts, schools and kindergarten teachers. Certified trainers trained through the cadre process described previously, (Developing a Cadre of Trainers to Train on Assessment and Curriculum Tools, page 38), provides training and support to kindergarten teachers on how to administer the assessment instruments in their school. In the study, participating districts or schools select a kindergarten assessment tool from a menu of options, which includes Teaching Strategies Gold, the Desired Results Developmental Profile, Formative Assessment System for Teachers and the Work Sampling System. Teachers receive in-person training on their selected tool, based on publisher recommendations, administer the tool within the first eight weeks of the school year, and enter scores into the tool's online data system.

2015 Progress

In late summer 2015, 79 kindergarten teachers began working with certified trainers to complete the recommended training programs for their selected assessment tools. These teachers were from the KEP sample of schools that had not yet gone through training. The training for each tool varied in length, depending on publisher recommendations.

In 2016, the implementation of voluntary pre-kindergarten (VPK) will require use of a KEP tool for documenting entry and exit measures. Training in KEP tool administration will be completed by all VPK sites.

Initiatives Related to Credentials, Certificates and Diplomas

There were five initiatives related to credentials, certificates and diplomas in operation in 2015. 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 2015 credentials, certificates and diplomas initiatives included:

- Creating a Relationship-based Professional Development credential
- Delivering training for the Family Service credential

- Developing the Minnesota Infant/Toddler credential
- Offering the Director's credential online
- Promoting programs that offer credit for prior learning.

Creating the Relationship-based Professional Development Credential

Key Goals

Update Minnesota's Relationship-based Professional Development competencies needed by professionals who work with early childhood and school-age care providers to support optimal development of all children.

Develop a credential for Relationship-based Professional Development specialists based on updated competencies.

Minnesota has a number of Relationship-based Professional Development specialists, including coaches, consultants and mentors, among other positions. These specialists work across a variety of early childhood settings, including family child care providers, Head Starts and center-based programs. However, because Relationship-based Professional Development coaches receive training from a variety of sources, each with their own topics and expectations, there has been no single, comprehensive set of expectations. This initiative creates a single set of updated competencies and a corresponding credential for Relationship-based Professional Development specialists.

2015 Progress

The Minnesota Department of Human Services released a request for proposals to contract with an organization to fulfill the two primary goals of this initiative. In the first part, the contractor is to update Minnesota's coaching competencies based on research from the field and other states. Following the competency update, the contractor will develop a corresponding training for new or experienced coaches. This training will include the theory, practice and skills needed to be a Relationship-based Professional Development specialist.

In late 2015, the Minnesota Department of Human Services received proposals from contractors. In 2016, contractor selection will be finalized, with the expectation that the credential and training will be released in early 2017.

Delivering Training for the Family Service Credential

Key Goal

Provide direct service staff with a credentialed, comprehensive and credit-based training experience for their work with children and families.

The Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Network provide Minnesota Head Start grantees with intensive training and technical assistance, including that needed for Family Service credentialing. The Family Service credential includes knowledge, skills and actions for staff working with diverse families. The network uses the Portage Project Family Service credential to support direct service staff through a comprehensive, credit-based training, with research-based best practices from early childhood education, human services and social work. The Family Service credential includes a training of trainers component intended for individuals who will implement the credential in their local agencies.

2015 Progress

The Family Service credential training process begins with a review of Head Start agency requests for family service training, requests that come into the Minnesota Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Network, the Minnesota Head Start Association, and the Minnesota Head Start Collaboration office. Requests consist of relationship-based competencies for staff and supervisors who work with families, as well as accompanying knowledge, skills and actions. Some Head Start agencies require new employees to complete the credential and others self-select, depending on professional development needs and plans.

Trainings begin when a large enough group requests the Family Service credential. In 2015, 19 Minnesota Head Start grantees attended the Family Service credential training of trainers. Once completed, these grantees have the capability to do credentialing with their own staff. Grantees do this by systematically building the Family Service credential process into their human resource and new employee training processes, offering the credentialing series annually. The Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Network support grantees who completed the training of trainers to build Family Service credentialing to become a regular aspect of their programs.

Development of the Minnesota Infant/Toddler Credential

Key Goal

Develop the Minnesota Infant/Toddler credential to meet all requirements for the level one Infant/Toddler Mental Health Endorsement program.

This initiative is to develop the Minnesota Infant/Toddler credential. This will be a new credential with 30 hours of training. It will meet all requirements for level one of the Minnesota Infant/Toddler Mental Health Endorsement program, and some training indicators in Parent Aware, as well as meeting 30 hours of the 120 training hours required for the Infant/Toddler Child Development Associate credential.

2015 Progress

Through a contract with the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota, developed the 30-hour Minnesota Infant/Toddler credential, which was completed in October 2015. This included developing versions in English, Spanish, Somali and Hmong. Child Care Aware districts will begin offering the credential in early 2016 through a series-based classroom option, which will include 15 sessions. An online synchronous version of the Infant/Toddler credential will also be offered on Eager to Learn. The credential is also being revised as a 20-hour credential specifically for foster care parents caring for infants and toddlers.

Offering the Director's Credential Online

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 using 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) co-sponsors the Director's credential, which meets director training requirements for NAEYC accreditation. Eager to Learn offers the coursework, including 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 a Parent Aware rating.

2015 Progress

Previously, requirements for eligibility to go through the Director's credential program changed to allow for anybody preparing for a leadership role, rather than just directors. The program made this change because, often, leadership recognizes high-quality teachers as being highly capable for director positions, but they may not have backgrounds in supervision, management or administration. With the more open admission requirements, Eager to Learn ran two cohorts in 2015, which included a cross-disciplinary group of providers, school-age care directors, instructors and infant/toddler directors. Twenty-five students in two cohorts completed the program in 2015, up 47 percent from 2014. A third cohort with 13 students started in 2015, scheduled to complete in June 2016.

Promoting Programs that Offer 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 offer credit for previous experience and training. 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 direct individual policies for awarding credit for prior learning. The center does not directly award credit, or offer direct advising for credit for prior learning.

2015 Progress

While the number of people gaining credit for prior or experiential learning is not formally tracked, an indirect indicator is in the number of professionals obtaining the Child Development Associate. According to the Council for Professional Recognition, in 2015, 398 professionals received the credential, which is up from 357 that received it in 2014. Of the 398 Child Development Associates awarded, 128 were infant and toddler-specific and 18 were bilingual-specific. In addition, 207 professionals renewed their Child Development Associates, with 73 infant and toddler-specific and two bilingual-specific, with 605 Child Development Associates awarded in 2015.

Initiatives Related to Scholarships and Financial Supports

Four initiatives provided financial supports in 2015 for early educators to make professional development more affordable. Offering financial supports and scholarships helps to reduce barriers to professional development and incentivizes providers to pursue Career Lattice advancement opportunities. Initiatives with these overall goals included:

- Providing T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® MINNESOTA scholarships for higher education
- Reimbursement of fees for individuals completing credentials
- Retention bonuses through Retaining Early Educators Through Attaining Incentives Now (R.E.E.T.A.I.N.)
- Supports for individuals pursuing a Child Development Associate.

Providing T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® MINNESOTA Scholarships for Higher Education

Key Goals

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

2015 Progress

The T.E.A.C.H. program saw increases in participation again in 2015. New marketing strategies to reach a more diverse population of eligible scholarship applicants and new audiences, which began in 2014, reaped significant benefits as the number of scholarships awarded increased by nearly 50 percent from 2014. There was also an uptake in scholarships for administrators and trainers, as well as for Child Care Aware coaches working with Parent Aware.

The National T.E.A.C.H. office in North Carolina began creating unique partnerships with chain-based child care programs to reach more eligible scholarship applicants. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® MINNESOTA began participating in these partnerships; 87 child care center program staff members received T.E.A.C.H. scholarships in Minnesota.

Reimbursement of Fees for Individuals Completing Credentials

Key Goal

Encourage participation in the Minnesota Child Care credential and Infant/Toddler credential programs, which ultimately lead 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 cost of the Minnesota Child Care and the Infant/Toddler credentials. For both credentials, cost of the training is subsidized 90 percent at the start of the program and participants are reimbursed for the additional 10 percent upon completion. Specific to the Infant/Toddler credential, the Minnesota Department of Human Services set aside funding for licensed foster care providers to take the training required to obtain the credential at no cost.

2015 Progress

The Minnesota Department of Human Services completed development of the Minnesota Infant/Toddler credential and the corresponding trainings to be delivered in cohorts online and in-person. Accordingly, 2015 was the first year where child care providers could receive reimbursement for these credential trainings.

Ten cohorts completed the Minnesota Child Care credential in 2015. These included two in Spanish, one in Somali, three online through Eager to Learn, and seven face to face. One-hundred-twenty-seven participants started the credential, representing 88 family child care programs and 39 center-based programs. Overall, 86 participants completed the credential, a 65 percent completion rate.

Also in 2015, seven new cohorts began working towards the Minnesota Child Care credential. These include cohorts in Somali, Spanish, online through Eager to Learn and face to face. Overall, 92 participants received reimbursement for participation in the credential. Program type was not available at the time of this report.

Retention Bonuses through Retaining Early Educators Through Attaining Incentives Now (R.E.E.T.A.I.N.)

Key Goal

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

The Retaining Early Educators Through Attaining Incentives Now (R.E.E.T.A.I.N.) 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, Child Development Associate credential, or completed the Minnesota Child Care credential
- Be working in the field for at least one year
- Be engaged in ongoing professional development
- Did not receive a R.E.E.T.A.I.N. bonus the previous year.

Minnesota Department of Human Services funding supports R.E.E.T.A.I.N. bonuses through the federal Child Care Development Fund. The Child Care Aware of Minnesota Coordinating Office administers these incentives.

2015 Progress

R.E.E.T.A.I.N. bonuses are more competitive than those offered by other initiatives in the scholarships and financial supports topic area. After receiving 300 applications, the program awarded 171 bonuses in 2015, totaling \$376,000. This was an increase from 2014, when the program awarded 144 bonuses for \$300,000. Because of how competitive the program had become, efforts continued to specify eligibility criteria to support the goals of T.E.A.C.H. and the Child Development Associate credential.

Supports for Pursuing a Child Development Associate Credential

Key Goal

Increase the number of early care and education providers who earned the Child Development Associate credential by providing scholarships.

This initiative provides scholarships to help early childhood educators understand the process and receive the Child Development Associate, a credential awarded by the national Center for Professional Recognition. 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 to cover the cost of trainings and assessment or renewal fees.

2015 Progress

Early educators received 159 assessment fee scholarships, 18 training scholarships, and 10 renewal fee scholarships through the program. As with previous program years, 2015 again saw high levels of participation from communities of color in the scholarship programs. Roughly, 60 percent of scholarship applicants were from communities of color. Recruitment efforts to increase the number of rural applicants continue, as awardees from greater Minnesota were only 15 percent of scholarship recipients in 2015.

Initiatives Related to Relationship-based Professional Development

Seventeen initiatives under the Relationship-based Professional Development topic area were in effect in 2015. Relationship-based Professional Development is the term given to activities related to coaching, consultation or mentoring to early educators or practitioners. These initiatives included:

- Advising Child Development Associate credential candidates
- Developing a coordinated referral process for connecting child care programs with inclusion coaches
- Establishing standards for approving and recognizing Relationship-based Professional Development
- Facilitating a user group to support Head Start staff in analyzing and using assessment data
- Improving the Quality Coaching model utilized in Parent Aware
- Partnering across agencies to support literacy coaching for family child care providers
- Providing additional training to Head Start home visitors who coach parents on preventing child sickness and injury
- Providing consultation or mentoring to child care programs pursuing national accreditation
- Providing mentoring to family child care providers pursuing national accreditation
- Providing ongoing support to accredited child care centers
- Providing reflective consultation for Parent Aware Quality Coaches
- Strengthening Relationship-based Professional Development delivery skills
- Supporting new CLASS coaches with mentoring
- Supporting the work of professional development advisors
- Using a multi-tiered coaching model to support literacy tutoring
- Using the Practice-based Coaching framework to improve school readiness practices of Head Start teachers
- Utilizing child care health consultants to support health and safety in child care settings.

Advising Child Development Associate Credential Candidates

Key Goal

Increase the number of early care and education providers who have achieved the Child Development Associate credential by providing advising and technical assistance.

This initiative provides assistance to help early childhood educators understand the process and receive the Child Development Associate (CDA), a credential awarded by the National Center for Professional Recognition. With funding from the federal Child Care Development Fund and Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Care Aware of Minnesota provided technical assistance and advising to those seeking a CDA credential.

2015 Progress

Child Care Aware of Minnesota defined technical assistance under this initiative as being phone and email support to providers looking for information or resources to help them on their path to achieve a Child Development Associate credential. CDA advising, on the other hand, was defined as in-depth counseling, including training inventories, assisting with Web-based applications and portfolio support, which may be done face to face or via phone or email. As opposed to technical assistance, advising likely takes place over a period of time. With newly established definitions, tracking of activities and outcomes began mid-year. During the last half of 2015, 20 individuals received technical assistance and 25 received CDA advising.

Developing a Coordinated Referral Process for Connecting Child Care Providers with Inclusion Coaches

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.

Decrease the number of pre-school expulsions.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services contracts with the Center for Inclusive Child Care (CICC) for provision of professional development opportunities for child care providers serving children with identified or suspected developmental delays and behavioral challenges, as well as consultation and support services for families who have children with special needs.

Through Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant, Parent Aware programs serving children with special needs and behavioral challenges were eligible to receive 30 hours of coaching provided by highly qualified Inclusion Coaches. Statewide consultation services were available to programs serving children with special needs and behavioral challenges. These initiatives help to ensure that early care and education settings are inclusive and of high quality.

2015 Progress

The Center for Inclusive Child Care continued providing technical assistance to Parent Aware Quality Coaches regarding protocols for referring Parent Aware programs to CICC for Inclusion Coaching services. CICC Inclusion Coaches provide technical assistance to child care providers on the Help Me Grow referral process for children suspected of developmental delays. CICC Inclusion Coaches also work collaboratively with child care health consultants and children’s mental health consultants to ensure appropriate services are offered to Parent Aware programs based on child/family and provider level of need. In 2015, 372 early care staff and education providers, who serve 408 children across 97 early care and education programs, participated in the Inclusion Coaching program.

The Center for Inclusive Child Care offers continuing professional development opportunities through trainings on children with special needs scheduled through the Child Care Aware training delivery system, as well as through podcasts and self-study modules. Eighty-six podcasts were available on the CICC website by the end of 2015.

Establishing Standards for Approving and Recognizing Relationship-based Professional Development

Key Goals

Track Relationship-based Professional Development activities in Develop.

Allow practitioners to use approved Relationship-based Professional Development activities towards movement on the Career Lattice, Parent Aware, and meeting certain licensing requirements.

Relationship-based Professional Development services include coaching, consulting, advising and mentoring. Work in this initiative includes creating approval standards in Develop for specialists who offer these services. Relationship-based Professional Development events entered into Develop count as clock hours for professionals similar to an in-person course.

2015 Progress

Work included creating five additional endorsement areas, including:

- Business consultants
- Early childhood accreditation coaches
- School-aged accreditation coach/consultant
- Inclusion Coaches, and
- Minnesota licensed Family Child Care Association mentors.

By the end of 2015, the Minnesota Department of Human Services established criteria for the five endorsement types and programmed it into Develop.

By Dec. 31, 2015, there were 86 Relationship-based Professional Development specialists approved in Develop as either a Parent Aware Quality Coach or CLASS coach. There were nearly 7,500 Relationship-based Professional Development events entered into Develop, about half of which counted towards individuals' Career Lattice steps.

Facilitating a User Group to Support Head Start Staff in Analyzing and Using Assessment Data

Key Goals

Support the authentic assessment process as a high-quality data collection activity in classrooms as an integral part of instructional planning and individualization.

Support using data in decision-making and encourage data analysis and interpretation to inform classroom instruction and individualization.

Explore evidence-based approaches to inform and strengthen classroom practice.

The Minnesota Head Start Association has facilitated a Quality Assessment User Group since 2006. This group functions as a learning community for education coordinators at Head Start programs to collaborate on how best to analyze student data to understand student progress and inform educational needs of students. Education coordinators use this information to work with teachers and develop strategies to serve student development. The group meets three times per year, after the Child Development Assessment monitoring check-points at the start, mid-point and end of the school year. This user group supports the use of other quality assessment tools, such as CLASS, and provides networking and education on related topics for education coordinators and Head Start coaches.

2015 Progress

The Quality Assessment Group was renamed **Head Start Child and Family Outcomes Group** to broaden its focus on outcomes for both children and their families. Identifying and collecting family outcomes was a new focus of the group. Head Start family support staff was added to the group to explore measurement tools that could capture the progress families experience through involvement in early childhood services.

The Head Start Child and Family Outcomes Group met three times to review data and discuss classroom instruction and family engagement strategies to improve child and family outcomes. There were about 100 education and family support staff enrolled in the group from 25 Head Start programs that served more than 13,000 children and families.

In 2015, a new report from the group's aggregated child assessment data was published describing the impact of one versus two years of early learning opportunities on Head Start children, including children who are English language learners. This report entitled, "Demonstrating Results III" is at <http://www.mnheadstart.org/PDF/Demonstrating%20Results%20III%20final.pdf>.

Improving the Quality Coaching Model Utilized in Parent Aware

Key Goals

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

Provide technical support to child care programs, documenting their practices in order to earn a Parent Aware Star Rating.

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

Parent Aware Quality Coaches use the "Parent Aware Implementation Manual" to provide approximately:

- Twenty to 30 hours of coaching on Building Quality for programs that are getting ready to enter Parent Aware
- Two to 15 hours of technical assistance to programs preparing to submit documentation for a Parent Aware Rating
- Three to five hours of technical assistance for programs, that receives a One, Two, or Three Star Rating.

Child care centers applying for a Three or Four Star Rating can receive up to 30 hours of CLASS coaching. Coaching is mainly face to face and one on one with program staff, with a few exceptions where group work is preferred.

2015 Progress

Parent Aware Quality Coaches documented nearly 7,500 Relationship-based Professional Development events in Develop, nearly 12,000 hours. About half of these events (and hours) can count toward an individual's Career Lattice step.

Child Care Aware and the Minnesota Department of Human Services worked to increase the number of CLASS Coaches to meet demand and help avoid sub-contracting. This included training Quality Coaches in CLASS, as coaches can fulfill both functions.

Child Care Aware and the Minnesota Department of Human Services conducted a Root Cause Analysis to help identify the challenges that were limiting Parent Aware Quality Coaches from completing the required 20 hours of Building Quality Coaching. Information collection for this analysis was completed near the end of the year and, going forward, will be analyzed into themes, which will be addressed moving forward.

Partnering Across Agencies to Support Literacy Coaching for Family Child Care Providers

Key Goals

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

Encourage family child care providers to engage in 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, St. Paul Promise Neighborhood and surrounding communities. Eligible providers must be licensed and in operation for a minimum of three years. In 90-minute sessions, two or three days per week, Reading Corps literacy tutors implement an early learning literacy curriculum that makes decisions based on data of children at the site. Reading Corps tutors actively engage and consult with family child care providers while they are working with children so that providers can continue literacy activities outside of tutoring sessions. Each Reading Corps tutor and family child care provider pair is matched with a coach from Think Small or ServeMinnesota to help facilitate the relationship between provider and tutor.

2015 Progress

In fall 2015, the Minnesota Reading Corps worked with 16 family child care providers in and around the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood, Minneapolis Northside Achievement Zone, northeast Minneapolis, Brooklyn Center and Robbinsdale. Together, these providers served 69 children. Two providers returned for a third year in the program, and seven returned for a second year. These nine providers received visits from Reading Corps tutors two or three times per week and bi-weekly coaching from an internal coach. As returning providers, they had the opportunity to attend six ongoing Professional Learning Community meetings for 15 hours of contact time (non-certificate hours). Topics include lesson plans, data review, family engagement, small group implementation and benchmarks. The seven other providers, all new in 2015, received tutor visits three times per week and bi-weekly coaching from an internal coach. They attended nine training sessions, totaling 23 hours, in the new SEEDS to Sprouts of Emerging Literacy program, which apply to the Career Lattice.

To support providers in the 2015 cohort, the Minnesota Reading Corps increased its capacity to five Reading Corps tutors. The Minnesota Reading Corps Family Child Care pilot increased family

engagement efforts by providing the opportunity for family child care providers to host family engagement events in the fall and spring. At these events, tutors and coaches had opportunities to share data and student portfolios, and discuss the program with families. This initiative is expanding its reach to other family child care providers.

Providing Additional Training to Head Start Home Visitors Who Coach Parents on Child Sickness and Injury

Key Goal

Reduce non-urgent emergency room visits for young children from birth to age 5 by educating parents and families about child sickness and injury.

In this initiative, the Minnesota Head Start Association trains Head Start home visiting staff to engage and educate families about child sickness and injury. Visiting staff use the book *What to Do When Your Child Gets Sick* as a resource for families to look up child sickness and what to do when faced with certain illnesses and injuries. When families have more information about the severity of illnesses and injuries, they are less likely to bring children to the emergency room for non-urgent reasons. Ultimately, this reduces health care costs. Families receive a copy of the book to use as a resource. The book is available in multiple languages, and uses language that is accessible for low-literacy populations.

2015 Progress

During the 2014-2015 school year, Minnesota Head Start staff reached about 1,400 families with health literacy information with 18 Head Start programs (55 percent) participating in the project. While the formal program evaluation conducted by Minnesota health plans was no longer in place, the programs continued to ask families to complete a pre-survey and a three-month follow-up survey to understand how families used the health literacy book and information in their daily lives, which more than 1,000 families completed. Noteworthy findings included:

- Parents reported using the health resource book as their first response when their child became sick—up from 2 percent in the pre-survey to 15 percent at the three-month follow-up
- Fewer parents indicated taking their children to the emergency room as their first response when their child became sick—down from 6 percent to 3 percent
- About 87 percent of the families surveyed used the health resource book in the three months following the health literacy discussion with their home visitor, and 47 percent used the book more than twice during that period.

The most common reasons families reported referring to the health resource book was to learn what they could do to manage their child's illness/health at home, or to learn more about a certain illness.

Providing Consultation to Child Care Centers Pursuing National Accreditation

Key Goal

Facilitate the national accreditation of 325 child care centers in the nine-county Twin Cities metropolitan area.

The Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children (MnAEYC) received funding from Greater Twin Cities United Way to operate the Child Care Accreditation Project (CAP). Through CAP, MnAEYC consultants provide services such as coaching, consultation, program improvement, and other financial support resources 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.

2015 Progress

MnAEYC recruited a modest number of programs into the final cohorts of CAP in 2015. It continued to support enrolled centers still pursuing accreditation and Parent Aware ratings on the accelerated pathway throughout 2015, the final full programmatic year of CAP. By the end of 2015, 318 recruited programs remained active in the project, serving an estimated 23,413 children, with the capacity to expand to 27,838. By the end of December, 288 of these programs, or more than 90 percent, received national accreditation. In addition, 155 of these programs received a 4-Star Parent Aware rating, which includes 49 percent of all centers in the program and 54 percent of those who received national accreditation.

Table 2. Distribution of child care centers receiving accreditation facilitation services by county

County	Programs
Anoka	30
Carver	18
Dakota	40
Hennepin	133
Isanti	3
Ramsey	64
Scott	15
Washington	15

MnAEYC consultants provided roughly 306 on-site consultations, totaling 994 hours out of 16,851 consultation hours since CAP began. In between on-site consultation sessions, emails and phone calls were exchanged between child care programs and project consultants. Program staff participated in training sessions on topics related to standards, and attended monthly cohort

meetings to help share information and network with other programs. Participants received roughly 32 training hours, which added to the 7,826 total training hours since CAP began.

Providing Mentoring to Family Child Care Providers Pursuing National Accreditation

Key Goal

Support licensed family child care providers to improve quality of programming to meet the Parent Aware standards and become accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care.

The Minnesota Licensed Family Child Care Association (MLFCCA), supported by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, contracts with experienced family child care providers to deliver one-on-one mentor support to other family child care providers. Providers eligible to receive mentor support are licensed family child care providers who provide child care for at least one at-risk child. MLFCCA mentors guide improvement of program quality, and support providers making steps towards achieving accreditation. Services are offered in three tiers:

- Tier 1. Free technical support to any family child care provider with questions about accreditation and/or Parent Aware
- Tier 2. Free initial assessments, in which a trained MLFCCA mentor works with licensed family child care providers to evaluate steps needed to reach accreditation
- Tier 3. Full support services (available to only a small number of providers), including one-on-one work with providers over several months to plan and implement improvements to meet Parent Aware indicators and National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) accreditation standards.

Providers are required to purchase a self-study guide and pay an accreditation application fee. At milestones within the process and after they become accredited, their fees are reimbursed in full.

2015 Progress

Seventeen family child care providers completed initial assessments and 18 accreditations were in process with tier three mentor support. Ten trained MLFCCA mentors delivered all initial assessments and worked one on one with licensed family child care providers working toward accreditation. These mentors often bring new candidates to the project through their encouragement and recognized leadership in the family child care community. Participating family child care providers comprised 11 counties.

Providing Ongoing Support to Accredited Child Care Centers

Key Goal

Facilitate professional learning communities, on-site consultation, and training with child care centers that have achieved national accreditation to sustain high quality practices.

Greater Twin Cities United Way (GTCUW) Women United has provided pilot funds to the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children (MnAEYC) since fall 2013 to develop and implement a program known initially as “Sustaining Quality.” This program was designed to provide on-going support to child care centers that had achieved accreditation through the support of the Child Care Accreditation Program, another GTCUW project.

Programs participating in Sustaining Quality receive training, access to professional learning communities facilitated by early childhood specialists, and on-site consultation in leadership development and quality improvement. They participate in a relationship-based cohort facilitated through the project. The goals of these activities are to:

- Support center directors in developing management and leadership skills needed to sustain quality and the program’s accreditation status
- Provide assessment tools to assist center directors in setting goals and making organizational changes necessary to sustain high quality over time, and
- Provide a network of colleagues for center directors to grow professionally, and to connect to resources necessary for sustaining program quality over time.

2015 Progress

By the end of 2015, Sustaining Quality was ending its second year of implementation, now serving two groups of participants: Directors from 41 early childhood centers in their first year of Sustaining Quality, and those from 25 centers (veterans) in their second program year. The veteran content was developed and piloted in 2015. These centers serve 6,386 children, with an enrollment capacity of 6,473 children.

The Sustaining Quality pilot delivered 628 person hours of professional development, 783 hours of individualized and professional learning communities (PLC) support and consultation hours, and paid for \$18,600 in accreditation annual report fees for the portion of fees that the state does not reimburse. Annual reports are required to maintain accredited status.

By the end of 2015, the vision for the final and sustainable model for Sustaining Quality had been developed, leading to a final year of pilot funding for 2016, aimed at expanding and refining the training and support model to maximize participation and take the model to scale. The result will be the Leadership Journey Series, offered by MnAEYC in 2016.

Reflective Consultation for Parent Aware Quality Coaches

Key Goal

Provide support to Parent Aware Quality Coaches through regional reflective consultation as they assist and support child care providers.

Parent Aware Quality Coaches work directly with child care providers to provide guidance, support and technical assistance to programs working towards a Parent Aware rating. While coaches develop technical expertise related to Parent Aware ratings, often they encounter challenges or unique situations related to the dynamic nature of coaching relationships. Through this initiative, the Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota, provides regional consultants to support Quality Coaches as they assist and support child care providers. Quality Coaches meet with their regional reflective consultant monthly in small groups to further develop coaching skills, discuss challenges, and develop further understanding about inter-personal relationships. Reflective consultation creates a supportive space for Quality Coaches to reflect honestly on their experiences, learn from consultants and from one another.

2015 Progress

When reflective consultation for Parent Aware Quality Coaches began, CEED contracted with one consultant who traveled to meet with Quality Coaches across the state. In 2015, after receiving positive feedback from Quality Coaches about the value of the sessions, CEED expanded the consultation program by increasing the number of consultants. With these additions, consultants are now regionally based in Detroit Lakes, Twin Cities, Aitkin, Willmar and Faribault. Having more regionally based consultants limits travel time and lessens the caseload of consultants, which strengthens relationships.

Also new, is the addition of virtual sessions by consultants working with Quality Coaches in rural areas. The consultants alternate between virtual and face-to-face meetings every other month. This reduces travel time and provides an alternate meeting method during inclement weather, while still experiencing the positive, relationship-building benefits of in-person consultations.

While CEED has received positive, informal feedback from Quality Coaches since the expansion, it will seek formal feedback in 2016 through an evaluation survey for both the Quality Coaches and consultants. Survey results will allow CEED to provide stakeholders with specific feedback to advance work.

Strengthening Relationship-based Professional Development Delivery Skills

Key Goal

Develop and strengthen Relationship-based Professional Development and related coaching skills of Parent Aware Quality Coaches.

Parent Aware Quality Coaches provide both Relationship-based Professional Development and technical assistance to programs participating in Parent Aware. Quality Coaches have opportunities to develop expertise and further strengthen their skills related to coaching. Through a one-day workshop, Quality Coaches practice skills related to relationship-building, instilling confidence, communication skills, providing support and modeling quality.

2015 Progress

Child Care Aware of Minnesota hosted six five-hour workshops throughout Minnesota for Quality Coaches on Relationship-based Professional Development delivery skills. There was one session in each of Child Care Aware of Minnesota's six geographic districts. Workshop attendance ranged from six to 12 Quality Coaches, with 44 attending overall.

Child Care Aware of Minnesota contracted with a highly skilled coach who currently facilitates workshops. Having a coach from the field helped to provide authenticity to discussions and examples. While all Quality Coaches assist providers in achieving a Parent Aware rating, sessions focused solely on skills related to delivery, rather than Parent Aware content. After the workshops, coaches shared examples of how they are applying content discussed in the workshops in their practice; some have even contacted the lead coach for follow-up and more situation-specific advice. As an added benefit of the workshop series, Child Care Aware of Minnesota and Quality Coaches appreciated the opportunity to spend time together, face to face, as many of their routine interactions are technology-based.

Supporting New CLASS Coaches with Mentoring

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 continue their collaboration in providing a mentorship program. Head Start CLASS coaches mentor Parent Aware CLASS coaches monthly for professional growth and capacity building. Pairs of mentors and mentees work together to establish a set of core agreements for how their mentorship will progress. In most cases, mentors and mentees are not working in the same organization so they discuss logistics around their meetings, and how a mentee will get experience with the CLASS tool. Commonly, mentors agree to have a mentee visit a Head Start setting and practice using the tool. This helps prepare mentees for their annual re-reliability test in using the CLASS tool.

2015 Progress

The Child Care Aware Coordinating Office continued to contract with the Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota, to implement the mentoring program. Child Care Aware of Minnesota also contracted with local Head Start organizations to identify one of their CLASS coaches to participate in the program. The Center for Early Education and Development offered support and technical assistance to the Head Start CLASS coaches about best practices in mentoring relationships. In 2015, 31 Child Care Aware of Minnesota CLASS coaches and 13 Head Start CLASS coaches participated in the program.

Supporting the Work of Professional Development Advisors

Key Goal

Assist individuals working in child care programs in cataloging past trainings, identifying key areas for growth, and setting individualized professional development goals, especially related to meeting Parent Aware training indicators.

Two sources fund professional development advisors in local Child Care Aware organizations:

- The Minnesota Department of Human Services' federal Child Care Development Fund, and
- Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant funding to support Parent Aware implementation.

Professional development advising helps child care professionals access professional development opportunities and document their progress. Professional development advisors work with family child care providers and lead teaching staff employed in Parent Aware-participating programs to identify past trainings that meet Parent Aware training indicators, and the trainings needed to reach specific Parent Aware Star Rating levels.

2015 Progress

Because of the large number of Parent Aware program participants needing help finding trainings that meet Parent Aware indicator requirements, the majority of Child Care Aware professional development advisors assisted participants over the phone. Ideally, there would be more time for face-to-face interactions; however, an increase in the number of participants, including re-rates and no increase in professional development advising staff, has made this unattainable. Recent upgrades to Develop and online learning records have made it more efficient and accurate for professional development advisors to support providers in using Minnesota Center for Professional Development approved training.

Professional development advisors were involved, to a lesser extent, in recruiting child care providers for the Minnesota Child Care credential. They also supported credential participants in completing credential coursework and applying for the Minnesota Infant/Toddler credential.

Using a Multi-tiered Coaching Model to Support Literacy Tutoring

Key Goals

Build internal capability and capacity within organizations for using data to inform instruction.

Implement evidence-based interventions with fidelity to increase school readiness.

The Minnesota Reading Corps coaching model uses a multi-tiered coaching model to support organizations to use data to inform instruction, use evidence-based interventions, and implement programs and interventions with fidelity. Through this model, site-specific internal coaches monitor, train and provide guidance to Reading Corps tutors on implementing assessments and interventions in programs serving children from age 3 to third grade. The internal coaches, who are generally teachers, curriculum directors or literacy specialists, serve as mentors for the Minnesota Reading Corps tutors during their service year. A cohort of external, master coaches provide training and support to internal coaches by working side by side, performing classroom and coaching session observations and using fidelity checklists to facilitate conversations and learning. Three times throughout the school year, pre-k master coaches facilitate meetings with internal coaches to review classroom data used to inform instruction. Monthly, K-3 master coaches facilitate meetings with internal coaches to review individual student progress, monitoring data used to inform instruction.

2015 Progress

The Minnesota Reading Corps includes two programs that use this coaching model: Serving those from age 3 to pre-kindergarten (pre-k) and kindergarten through third grade (K-3). During the 2014-2015 school year, more than 650 internal coaches and more than 70 master coaches provided support to 1,114 program tutors.

Child indicator data collected throughout the 2014-2015 school year informed an end-of-year report, which documented the progress of Reading Corps students. In the pre-k program, 86 percent of 4- and 5-year-old students showed growth in at least three of the five early literacy skill areas measured, and 68 percent showed growth in at least four of the five early literacy skill areas measured. In the K-3 program, students served have been identified as being at risk of future reading difficulties. The K-3 results indicated that 91 percent of program kindergarteners, between 62 and 79 percent of program first graders (two different measures), 76 percent of program second graders, and 87 percent of program third graders, exceeded expected grade-level target growth, indicating they are closing the achievement gap.

Using the Practice-based Coaching Framework to Improve the School Readiness Practices of Head Start Teachers

Key Goal

Improve early childhood education teachers' use of evidence-based interactional and teaching practices in ways that support progress toward school readiness.

In Minnesota, the Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Network provides Head Start grantees with intensive training and technical assistance services through a collection of early childhood school readiness services. It is the network's role to identify, document and support the professional development needs of Minnesota Head Start grantees, and to provide those services within guidelines of the Office of Head Start, in collaboration with other Minnesota early childhood education entities. Head Start adopted the Practice-based Coaching framework as one form of evidence-based professional development designed to support teachers as they implement effective interactional teaching practices that lead to positive outcomes for children. Practice-based Coaching supports effective teaching practices and informed decision making, focusing on three areas:

- Shared goals and action plans
- Focused observation
- Reflection and feedback.

2015 Progress

To advance their goals for supporting Head Start grantees, the Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Network developed the Practice-based Coaching Leadership Academies. The design and purpose of the academies is to support systemic decisions about professional development and coaching, inclusive of policies, preparation and processes as a team. The academies are comprised of two parts:

- Two-and-a-half days of workshops where coaching experts guide teams in planning for implementation and evaluation of Practice-based Coaching in their programs
- A two-day workshop designed to support coaches, with a Teachers Learning and Collaborating component designed to support facilitators of group coaching models.

Nine programs completed the academies and two were in the process of completion.

Utilizing Child Care Health Consultants to Support Health and Safety in Child Care Settings

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, funded by Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant, to provide grants to child care health consultants in the four Race to the Top Transformation Zones. Grantee consultants offer health and safety assessments and recommendations, trainings, and assistance coordinating individual health and emergency plans for children with special needs, and referrals to additional resources. The consultants receive training using a curriculum from the National Training Institute for child care health consultants. In Minnesota, licensed child care centers are required to seek child care health consultation from a registered nurse, public health nurse or licensed physician. This initiative also provides health consultation services for family child care providers, for whom it is not required.

2015 Progress

The child care health consultants in the rural Transformation Zones reached out to maintain and expand working relationships, communicate available services, and identify specific needs related to child health and safety with early learning networks, licensors, Quality Coaches, and individual providers in their zones. Consultants worked on education, which included training child care staff, parents and children on topics such as food safety, car seat safety, emergency preparedness, health care planning for children with specific health conditions, immunization requirements, pool and lake safety, among others. This initiative engaged families with information and resources in child care settings, and included safety guides for family child care providers in licensing newsletters.

Child care health consultants also provided technical assistance to child care providers and Quality Coaches and answered questions related to child health and safety. Consultants in the rural Transformation Zones documented 239 points of contact with child care providers, including 46 on-site visits with Parent Aware-participating providers, 75 telephone calls and 113 emails. This work is funded through 2016.

Initiatives Related to Technology and Data Systems

Three initiatives in 2015 helped providers gain access to technology tools for planning and tracking professional development. All three relate to Develop, Minnesota's Quality Improvement and Registry Tool. Develop provides individual members and their employers with a record of the education and training that practitioners have completed, and provides a searchable database of professional development opportunities. Members of Develop submit information about their degrees, credentials, trainings and experience. Staff of the Minnesota Center for Professional Development verifies these accomplishments and assign practitioners a step on the Career Lattice. The initiatives related to building, enhancing and supporting technology and data systems included:

- Developing an online version of the Individual Training Needs Assessment
- Including training events offered by school districts, charter schools and Head Start programs in Develop
- Increasing access to Develop, Minnesota's Quality Improvement and Registry Tool.

Developing an Online Version of the Individual Training Needs Assessment

Key Goal

Facilitate informed career planning and development for early educators.

The Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA) is a survey tool for providers to use to inventory the experiences they have, and their comfort with each content area of the 2004 Core Competencies. After completing a series of questions, responses help to determine the types of trainings that a professional should take to move forward on the Career Lattice. Questions on the Individual Training Needs Assessment are generally situation-based with an agreement-scale for how frequently respondents perform tasks.

2015 Progress

The publication of “Minnesota’s Knowledge and Competency Framework for Early Childhood Professionals” (KCF) allowed work on the ITNA to proceed. At the close of 2015, the Minnesota Department of Human Services entered into a contract with an independent grantee to develop a bank of 30 questions for each content area of the three editions of the KCF: Working in Family Child Care, Working with Infants and Toddlers, and Working with Preschool Age Children. Plans for 2016 include importing the questions, running a small pilot and launching the ITNA online for public use.

Including Training Events Offered by School Districts, Charter Schools and Head Start Programs in Develop

Key Goal

Create pathways for Develop to be inclusive of all early childhood care and education programs.

While Develop, and the professional development registry that preceded it, has historically been seen as a tool for child care programs to track, record and share trainings and training materials, a larger goal is to have it be more inclusive of trainings and professionals in all early care and education sites. This initiative is working towards creating inter-agency coordination and reducing barriers to ultimately increase participation in Develop by all programs. Initially, the Minnesota Department of Human Services and Minnesota Center for Professional Development created a pilot for interested Head Start programs to facilitate participation in Develop. Since then, efforts have expanded to include charter schools, school districts and additional Head Start programs. Having more programs entering training into Develop creates a platform for increased cross-sector participation in trainings and opportunities for networking and relationship-building.

2015 Progress

Building off of efforts that began in 2013, many school districts, Head Start programs and state agencies registered as Training Sponsor Organizations in Develop, which provided these entities with expedited course approval rights. Each of these three organization types have built in regulatory checks and balances of the quality of both trainers and courses that were deemed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services to meet or exceed the standard applied by the Minnesota Center for Professional Development (MNCPD). This decision removed a barrier to participation in Develop by school districts, Head Start programs and state agencies. It also encouraged outreach to child care providers within the Training Sponsor Organization's respective service areas to join professional development opportunities for which they may receive approved hours on their learning record to be applied to their Career Lattice step.

Increasing Access to Develop: Minnesota's Quality Improvement and Registry Tool

Key Goal

Build a free online toolbox for the early learning and school-age care community that offers an array of tools to support quality improvement and professional development:

Under this initiative, with funding from the Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant and other sources, a new, updated system that expanded professional development features and added new features to support Parent Aware replaced the Minnesota Professional Development Registry. This new multi-purpose toolbox, re-branded as Develop, is available at www.developtoolmn.org. The one-stop-shop approach works to bridge the divide between professional development and quality improvement so that programs and professionals can access a variety of tools with a single login, and state-run initiatives can operate more efficiently by sharing data and aligning policies and procedures. For example, Parent Aware Ratings for child care programs depend, in part, on the Career Lattice levels and learning records of program staff. Rather than asking teaching staff to print and submit copies of their learning record, Parent Aware raters are able to pull up-to-date learning records for staff directly from Develop.

2015 Progress

Develop received more than 7,100 individual membership applications in 2015, including 4,090 renewals and 3,075 new applications. Overall, memberships to Develop (which includes applicants from 2015, and those who applied in 2014 and remained active in 2015) grew by 37 percent, to more than 8,900 professionals. By the end of 2015, nearly half of all licensed child care centers and 11 percent of licensed family child care providers have claimed organizational accounts in Develop.

As a new feature added in 2015, child care center directors can record more details in Develop about each of their employees. Child care center licensors are now able to log into Develop and access employee records and assign staff qualifications to individual staff members. These qualifications then appear on individual learning records and can be transferred to new employers.

Work to integrate two other professional development-related data systems into Develop began in 2015. Individuals wishing to take training through Eager to Learn now use their Develop credentials to log into Eager to Learn, and use Develop to register and pay for training. The seamless user experience has resulted in an increase in both Develop and Eager to Learn users. Additionally, work to prepare to integrate MNStreams, Child Care Aware of Minnesota's data system for registering for face-to-face training into Develop began; this integration will allow the

MNStreams data system to be dismantled and users will instead register and pay for trainings through Develop. This work is expected to be completed in 2016.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services created a new staff position, the Develop administrator, to engage with Develop users across the state. This position works with Develop support staff, also hired in 2015, to ensure that Develop is used in the most effective way possible to support professional development and quality improvement.

Appendix B: Expanded Methodology

Minnesota's Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant application specifies that a Great Workforce report on Race to the Top-funded projects, goals and outcomes be published annually. Data for this report was collected through two primary methods: A series of phone interviews and email correspondence with key initiative contacts; and a focus group-style meeting to identify collaborative progress and achievements, recognize shared challenges and identify opportunities for future work.

Defining the Scope

Minnesota's Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grant application noted that all programs and efforts that received Race to the Top funding would be included in the annual reports. In addition, staff from partner state agencies made the decision to include a number of efforts that indirectly benefitted from Race to the Top funding, which 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 50 projects (or initiatives) that fall under six categories of work (topic areas)

Corresponding with Key Contacts

After identifying the initiatives to include in this report, a master list was developed with one or two key contacts for each. Key contacts were selected based on their overall familiarity and involvement in the work and leadership on achieving key goals.

Researchers from The Improve Group followed up with each key contact through email to schedule phone interviews or arrange a process for updating existing information from the 2014 report, or develop content for new initiatives. Interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes, depending on the number of initiatives for which the interviewee was the primary contact.

Key informants provided information about goals of the initiative and a description of the work to achieve those goals. Informants also provided an overview of the progress made during the 2015 calendar year. For initiatives included in the 2015 Great Workforce annual report, interviewees received an initiative description, key goals and 2015 progress from that report. They discussed what had changed and what still held true since the previous year.

Collaborative Meeting

The Improve Group facilitated one focus group-like meeting with key informants across topic areas and individual initiatives. This meeting served to inform the content of this report, as participants shared information about collaborative efforts. Overall, 16 stakeholders participated in this meeting, including representatives from the Minnesota Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and other partnering organizations.

Overall, this meeting contributed to the 2015 Great Workforce 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 collaborative meeting helped to ensure that the full group contributed to and understood the findings and that the report captured ideas from a shared perspective.