

The Parent Aware Ratings

What is Parent Aware?	A quality rating system for public and private child care and early education programs. Programs are rated on a one- to four-star scale. Parent Aware gives information about program quality to all parents and compliments the Early Learning Scholarship program to provide low-income children with access to high quality programs statewide.
Where did it come from?	From 2006-2011 Minnesota CEOs and community leaders formed the MN Early Learning Foundation a non-profit that ultimately invested \$20 million in private funding to pilot test the Early Learning Scholarships and Parent Aware Ratings. \$4 million of the investment was put into research and evaluation, which showed the programs worked. Later the state of Minnesota adopted the approaches.
What's the goal?	<p>Help kids. Increase the number of Minnesota children who benefit from the use of early learning best practices in child care and early education programs. Best practices like having a plan in place to support learning, paying attention to the individual needs of children, understanding and supporting a child's family, and being well-trained in supporting child development.</p> <p>Sound investment. Ensure that more of the taxpayer investment Minnesota makes in child care and early education goes to the type of quality programs that deliver positive outcomes with the best return-on-investment for taxpayers.</p>
How are programs helped by Parent Aware?	<p>Coaching. For programs that volunteer, Parent Aware provides coaching, grants, and training to help them adopt early learning best practices and get a Parent Aware Rating.</p> <p>Rewards. Volunteer programs who participate in Parent Aware are rewarded by private-pay parents using the Ratings in their shopping and publicly-funded parents using Early Learning Scholarships and Child Care Assistance subsidies.</p>
How does it help parents?	75% of Minnesota parents with children under age six are in the labor force. Ratings empower parents to find programs in their community who are using best practices for positive outcomes. The online search website – www.parentaware.org has proven very popular with parents.
Is Parent Aware pushing children to learn too early?	Absolutely not. In fact, it is impossible to stop the fast-developing brains of young children from learning. What's most important is that that early learning take place through stimulating play supported by caring, attentive adults. That's exactly what Parent Aware helps to foster and why you'll see books, toys and art supplies in Parent Aware rated programs, not baby sized desks and worksheets.
Is Parent Aware just for programs in centers?	Parent Aware is for all types of early care and education programs. There are currently nearly 1,500 licensed home-based child care programs all over the state participating in Parent Aware. The most recent survey of newly rated providers statewide found that 92% had an overall positive experience with the program, including training availability. The group also reported quality improvements as part of their participation.
Does Parent Aware work?	Two rigorous independent evaluations (2011, 2016) found that children in rated programs are making kindergarten-readiness gains, with low-income kids making the most significant gains. The most recent evaluation also found that Parent Aware includes the factors that matter most for supporting child development.