



WILDER RESEARCH, CHILD TRENDS, SRI INTERNATIONAL,  
AND CENTER FOR EARLY EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT,  
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

# Evaluation of the Pre-Kindergarten Allowances Project

**Prepared for:**  
**Early Childhood Policy & Finance Committee**  
**Minnesota State Legislature**  
**March 4, 2010**

**Presented by Scott McConnell, University of Minnesota**  
**for Donna Spiker, SRI International**

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## History and Background

- Pre-K Allowances created in 2007
  - Goal - Increase Access & Quality for low-income children in pilot areas
  - \$6 million appropriation
  - MELF-funded evaluation conducted by SRI
- **Amounts**
  - Up to 18 months or until child enters kindergarten
  - Awards not to exceed \$4,000 in any 12-month period
- **Uses**
  - Pay parent fees (must be covered first)
  - Increase slots or length of placement in high-quality programs
  - Improve ECE program quality

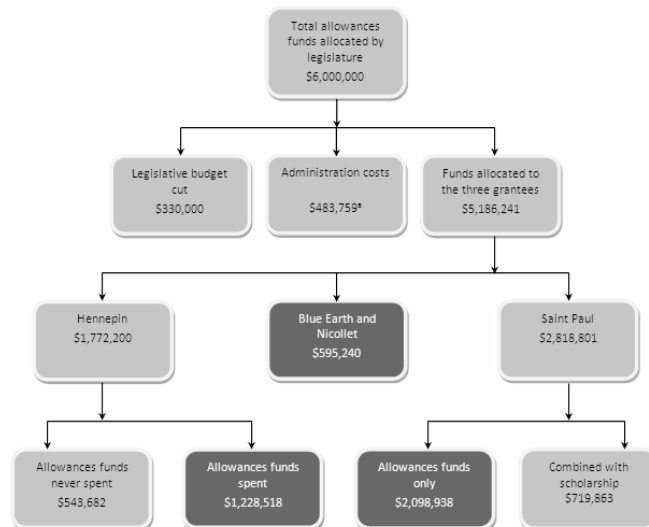
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## Eligibility

- Families
  - Income at or below 185% FPL
  - One or more children 3 or 4 years of age
  - Reside in one of three Parent Aware pilot areas
- Programs
  - Parent Aware 3- or 4-star rating *or*
  - Head Start or Accredited program *or*
  - Provisional rating from MDE or DHS

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## Distribution of Allowances Funds



\*Total amount in dark green boxes = \$3,922,696

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## Evaluation Questions

- What were the characteristics of children and families?
- What types of ECE programs did families select, and did receiving an allowance change the program families selected?
- How did ECE programs use allowances funds to increase access to and/or the quality of their program?
- Were parents receiving allowances using them to access high-quality ECE programs for their children?
- How were the allowances funds used with other funding sources (e.g., CCAP)?
- How was the Pre-K Allowances Project perceived by parents, ECE programs/providers, and the administering agencies?

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## Number of Children Receiving Allowances

- Total of 1,147
  - 973 allowances only
  - 174 with scholarships (in Saint Paul)
- Of the 973
  - 518 (53%) in Saint Paul
  - 312 (32%) in Hennepin
  - 143 (15%) in Blue Earth/Nicollet



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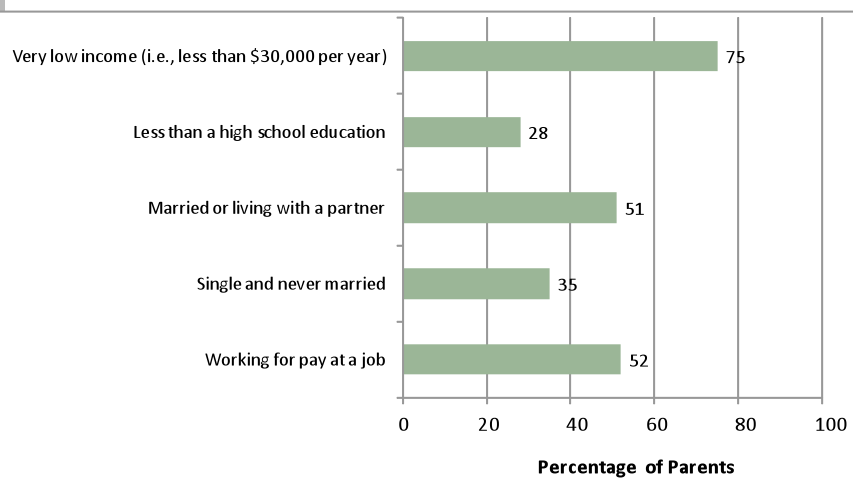
## Characteristics of the Children

- **Children's Age**
  - 29% <4 years
  - 56% 4-5 years
  - 15% >5 years
- **Ethnicity**
  - 40% African-American
  - 14% White
  - 13% Asian
  - 9% Latino
- **Home Language**
  - 70% English
  - 7% Hmong
  - 5% Spanish
  - 3% Somali



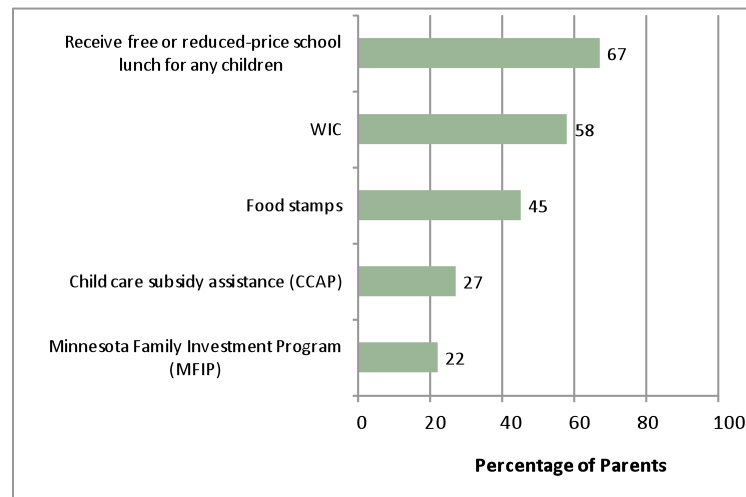
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## Characteristics of the Families



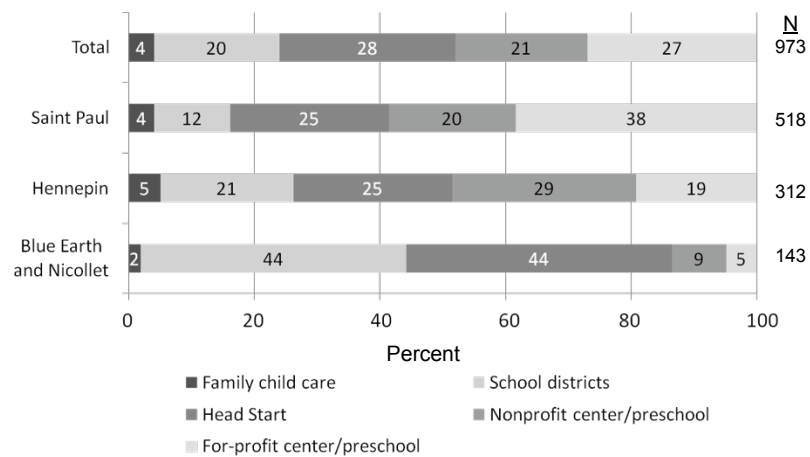
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## Characteristics of the Families

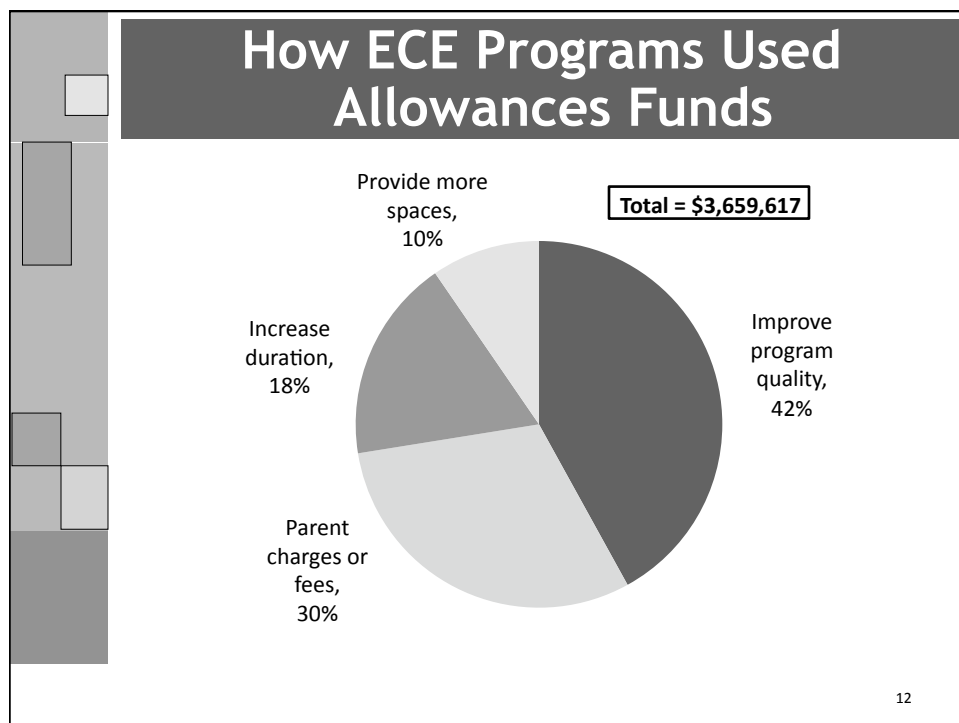
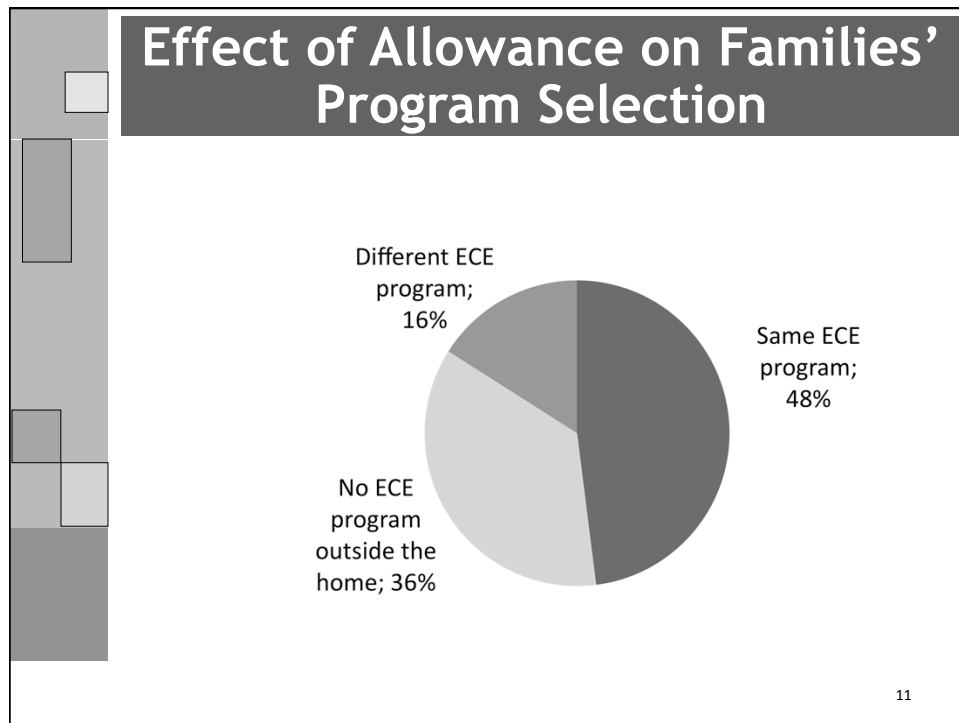


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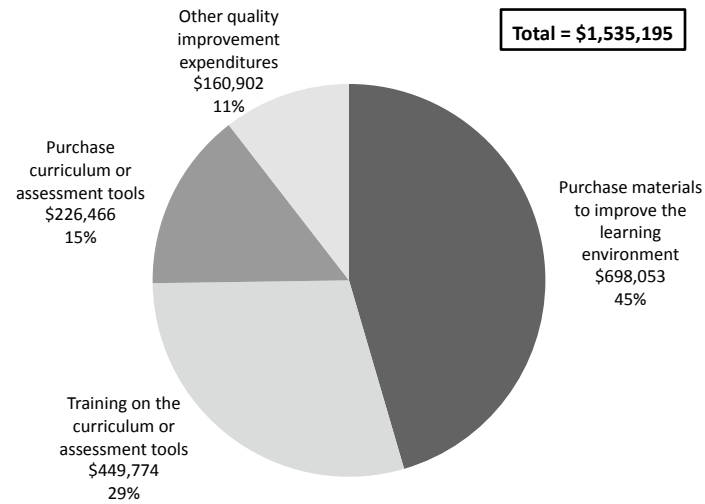
## Types of ECE Programs Selected by Families



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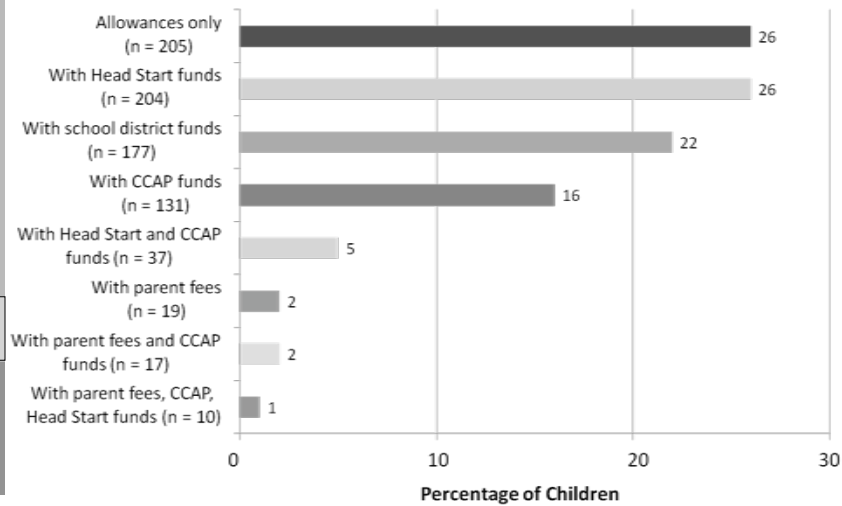


## How ECE Programs Used Allowances Funds to Improve Quality



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## How allowances funds were used with other funding sources



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## Parent, Program, and Stakeholder Experiences

- Parents
  - Parents learned about allowances from a variety of sources, with 45% from ECD program
  - Parents generally satisfied with process
- Programs
  - Viewed program as means for increasing access and quality
  - Found some features confusing or complex
- DHS and MDE saw positive effects for children, families, and programs

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## Challenges and Implications

- Challenges
  - Implementation and procedures
  - Combination of fee-based and QI uses confusing
  - Coordination with CCAP difficult
  - Initial program supply
- Implications
  - Funds used for both access and quality
  - Coordination with other funding streams sometimes challenging
  - Appears to allow for targeting of funding

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## Questions?



Report and brief available at [www.melf.us](http://www.melf.us)  
Contact SRI with questions: [donna.spiker@sri.com](mailto:donna.spiker@sri.com)

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