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Evaluation of School Readiness Connections Pilot Project Final Report

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Executive Summary

Legislation passed during Minnesota's 2007 legislative session established School Readiness Service Agreements (SRSA) that provided funds to pay child care providers higher rates than had previously been allowed under Minnesota Statutes, section 119B.13. The SRSA also allowed the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) to suspend some administrative policies for children being cared for under these agreements. The goal of the School Readiness Connections (SRC) project was to create incentives for child care programs with high concentrations of Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) children to provide services that support school readiness and incentives for families receiving subsidies from the child care assistance program to choose these child care programs for their children.

DHS contracted with SRI International to conduct an evaluation of the SRC pilot project. This final report presents background on and the findings from the evaluation, as well as recommendations stemming from it. The findings in this report of the evaluation of the SRC project implementation from July 2007 through June 2009 include data on the following:

- Children, families, and child care programs that participated in the SRC project
- Families' experience with CCAP, the SRC project, and their providers/programs
- SRC project policies and practices
- How the SRC funds are being used and their interaction with other funding
- Impacts on providers/programs and children/families
- School readiness skills and abilities of the preschool-age children who participated in the SRC project
- Process of implementation and ongoing administration of the SRC project.

Among the key findings are the following:

- Fourteen early care and education programs were selected to receive SRC funds for some of their enrolled children. Of these programs, 9 were licensed child care centers, and 5 were licensed family child care programs.
- A total of 364 children who participated in the SRC project were enrolled on a rolling basis starting in December 2007. According to the SRC program reports,
 - Across all 364 children, the average length of time enrolled in the SRC project was 36 weeks (about 9 months).
 - Children's enrollment ranged from 1 week to 80 weeks (between less than 1 month and 21 months).
 - At the time they started participating in the SRC project, children ranged in age from infants to 5 years old.
- On average, the families' annual household incomes were \$18,138, with a range from \$0 to \$47,601. The size of participating families ranged from two to eight persons, with about half having three or four family members in the household (49%).
- According to the CCAP administrative data, from February 1 through July 31, 2008, the SRC project cost an **additional** \$242,112 for child care services for a total of 253 children.¹ This total expenditure is 33% more than what would have been authorized if the children were receiving only CCAP.
 - Of this total, \$140,588 spent was from Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) Child Care funds (which pay for the child care of families receiving MFIP or DWP and those who have recently left the programs), and \$100,931 was from Basic Sliding Fee (BSF) funds.²

¹ This estimate accounts for only the 253 children for whom DHS provided payment information. No payment information was available for 111 children (31% of the 364 participating children).

- The majority of children (62%) received CCAP through MFIP Child Care funds during the SRC project.
- The SRC project funding enabled child care programs to enhance the services and supports they provided children and families. The impacts, appreciated by parents and providers, included the following:
 - Increasing the amount and continuity of care
 - Improving child care center program staff’s and family child care providers’ ability to make and follow through on referrals to other services and supports for children and families
 - Supporting communication between child care providers and parents to support children’s early learning
 - Supporting the implementation of child assessment and progress monitoring.
- In the program surveys, child care programs reported that they had implemented the following types of quality improvement activities using the SRC funds:
 - All the child care programs (100%) (detailed in the report) used some SRC funds for **family partnerships** and **teaching materials and strategies**.
 - Almost two-thirds of the child care programs (64%) used some SRC funds for **tracking learning**.
 - Almost three-fourths of the child care programs (71%) used some SRC funds for **teacher training and education**.
 - Almost all of the child care programs (93%) used some SRC funds for **other activities** (e.g., substitute teachers, additional staff hours, and other quality improvements).
- The parent survey responses indicated that parents were very pleased with the SRC project and its benefits for them and their children.
 - Parents reported satisfaction that the child care programs provided a safe and educational place for their children to be while they needed to work, go to school, or take care of daily needs.
 - Parents reported a high degree of satisfaction about their experiences with their SRC providers and referrals facilitated by the providers.
- SRC providers reported a high degree of satisfaction with the use of the Work Sampling System (WSS) as a tool for child assessment and progress monitoring for children. Providers noted that the WSS assessments helped their teachers in a variety of ways, including the following:
 - Observing the children more effectively
 - Evaluating children’s progress on developmental milestones
 - Communicating this information to the parents
 - Creating custom goals for the child
 - Integrating the WSS results into the classroom and playground daily activities
 - Offering parents opportunities to help foster their children’s development at home.
- Data from detailed interviews with DHS staff and providers indicated that the administration of the SRC project went smoothly, and the report contains suggestions for improvements in any future replications or expansion of the SRC project.

The results of the evaluation indicate that the SRC project was successful in meeting its goals, and well managed by DHS staff. The report concludes with a set of additional questions and issues for DHS to consider in any replication or expansion of the SRC project.

² These totals include only those families for whom an income source was designated. Three families did not have an income source designated, which is why these two totals are \$593 less than the total SRC cost of \$242,112.

Overview

Legislation passed during Minnesota's 2007 legislative session established School Readiness Service Agreements (SRSAs) that provided funds to pay child care providers higher rates than had previously been allowed under Minnesota Statutes, section 119B.13. The SRSAs also allowed the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) to suspend some administrative policies for children being cared for under these agreements. The Minnesota DHS administered and provided oversight for the SRSAs through the School Readiness Connections (SRC) pilot project.³ The goals of the SRC project were (1) to provide incentives for selected high-quality child care programs (both child care center and family child care) to partner with counties and parents to promote the skills and abilities that children (ages 0–5) served by the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) need to succeed in school and (2) “to address several related barriers and opportunities encountered by many of the parents of the 23,000 Minnesota children who now receive subsidized care.”⁴

DHS contracted with SRI International to conduct an evaluation of the SRC pilot project. This final report presents background on and the findings from the evaluation, as well as recommendations stemming from it.⁵ The report contains five sections.

- **Introduction.** The rationale, goals, and eligibility requirements for the SRC project are described.
- **Evaluation Questions.** The five evaluation questions are listed.
- **Methodology.** The data collection approaches and respondents are described.
- **Findings.** The findings of our evaluation of the SRC project implementation from July 2007 through June 2009 are presented. This section includes final data on the following:
 - Children, families, and child care programs that participated in the SRC project
 - Families' experience with CCAP, the SRC project, and their providers/programs
 - SRC project policies and practices
 - How the SRC funds are being used and their interaction with other funding
 - Impacts on providers/programs and children/families
 - School readiness skills and abilities of the preschool-age children who participated in the SRC project
 - Process of implementation and ongoing administration of the SRC project.
- **Summary and Recommendations.** The project achievements related to the evaluation questions and factors that promoted and inhibited the implementation and administration of the SRC project are described. Recommendations from the project evaluation and additional questions to be addressed are presented.

³ Legislation in 2009 extended funding of the SRC pilot through June 2011.

⁴ The Minnesota DHS website is at www.dhs.state.mn.us.

⁵ An interim report was submitted to DHS on November 10, 2008, summarizing the data collected from July 2007 through July 2008.

Introduction

Minnesota Child Care Assistance Program

The purpose of the Minnesota Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) program is to provide financial subsidies to help low-income families pay for child care so that parents may pursue employment or education leading to employment and children are well cared for and prepared to enter school ready to learn. The CCAP is funded through the federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) transfer funds, state appropriations, and county matching funds. The CCAP is administered at the county level, and county child care staff or county contracted agency staff work with families to determine child care assistance eligibility. The program is supervised at the state level by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). DHS and the state legislature set many of the eligibility requirements for the program within parameters identified in federal regulations.

The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) and the Diversionary Work Program (DWP) are cash assistance programs that help families work toward economic stability. The state fully funds child care assistance for families who participate in MFIP or DWP or who have recently moved off MFIP or DWP. In addition, as funds allow the Basic Sliding Fee (BSF) program assists low-income working families who are not participating in MFIP or DWP with child care costs. Families earning 47% of the Standard Median Income (SMI) or less are eligible to enter the BSF program. Families leave the program when their earnings are above 67% of the SMI. Families with incomes above 75% of the federal poverty level are required to contribute funds toward their child care expenses. The amount of this copayment is based on household income and family size.

Families eligible for CCAP may receive a child care subsidy. The amount of child care the state will pay for is determined by the parents' work and/or school schedules and the child's need for care. Families may select any legally operating licensed or unlicensed child care program or provider.

The legislature has established maximum rates (Minnesota Statutes, section 119B.13) that may be paid to child care programs caring for children participating in CCAP. Maximum rates are set for each county in four different age groups (infant, toddler, preschool, and school age) and in three units of time (hourly, daily, and weekly). The subsidy is the child care program's typical charge minus the family copayment or the CCAP county maximum rate minus the family copayment, whichever is less. Current CCAP maximums cover rates charged by 51.6% of rural and 43.5% of urban licensed family child care providers and 39.5% of rural and 38.4% of urban licensed child care center programs.⁶ A child care program—licensed or unlicensed—holding a current early childhood development credential or accreditation may be paid an additional 15% differential rate above the CCAP maximum rate, up to its actual provider charge.

⁶ The percentage of child care program rates covered is calculated by dividing the number of child care program rates reported on the 2009 Rate Survey of licensed Minnesota child care programs that are at or below the applicable maximum rate by the total number of all program rates reported. The applicable maximum rates used for this calculation are the standard maximum rates.

Background on the School Readiness Connections Pilot Project

The legislation that established the School Readiness Connections (SRC) pilot project was introduced soon after the Minnesota Governor's Summit on School Readiness held in June and July 2006. The goal of the summit was to improve and coordinate Minnesota's early childhood programs so as to increase the school readiness of children at risk of not being fully prepared for kindergarten. The Minnesota School Readiness Studies have identified that children in families with low incomes and children of mothers with less education are at risk with regard to school readiness.⁷ The two specific objectives of the summit were

- To identify the research-based program practices and features critical to the effectiveness of early childhood programs that serve children at risk of entering kindergarten unprepared
- To incorporate those program practices and features into Minnesota's early childhood programs and system.

As a result of the summit, several themes were submitted to the governor for "improvements to Minnesota's early childhood programs that support the kindergarten preparedness of children most at risk for not being fully prepared for school success,"⁸ and these are the themes that directly relate to the SRC project:

- **Intensity and duration.** Provide publicly funded early childhood education programs that are of sufficient duration or intensity to meet the needs of children determined not to be fully prepared for kindergarten.
- **Embedded educational instruction.** Provide compensatory literacy and language and math instruction and activities in all early childhood settings for children who may be at risk and create a child assessment system for children participating in publicly funded early childhood programs.
- **Professional development.** Provide teachers and caregivers training in child observation and assessment and curriculum planning as fundamental to effective school readiness programs.
- **Program transparency.** Provide parents with easy-to-understand information about their children's development.

A key recommendation from the Governor's Summit related to CCAP⁹ was to create incentives for child care programs with high concentrations of CCAP children to provide services that support school readiness and incentives for families receiving subsidies from the child care assistance program to choose these child care programs for their children.

⁷ Minnesota Department of Education (2008). *Minnesota school readiness study: Developmental assessment at kindergarten entrance*. This report and the reports of previous study years are available at <http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/EarlyLearning/documents/Report/013941.pdf>

⁸ *Minnesota Governor's Summit on School Readiness 2006, Combined Report and Program Analysis by Research Elements*. Available at <http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/EarlyLearning/documents/Report/031188.pdf>.

⁹ Department of Education and Department of Human Services Staff. (2006). *Breakout session notes*. Minnesota Governor's Summit on School Readiness 2006.

Goals of the SRC Project

On the basis of discussions at the Governor's Summit in 2006 and the SRC legislation of 2007, DHS established four goals for the SRC project:

1. Promote the skills and abilities that children served by CCAP need to succeed in school
2. Improve the quality of the child care for children served by CCAP
3. Improve the continuity of child care for children served by CCAP
4. Continue to support parents' employment and/or schooling leading to employment.

Eligibility Requirements for the SRC Project

The 2007 SRC legislation included eligibility requirements for child care programs that wanted to apply to participate in the SRC project and for families who wanted to participate in the project. The intent was to select child care programs that were already delivering high-quality services and supports to children and families and to support children ages 0–5 in developing the skills and abilities needed to begin kindergarten. Therefore, the legislation limited eligibility for the project to children who had not yet entered kindergarten and included nine factors that DHS used to evaluate the applications submitted by child care programs. Exhibit 1 lists the main differences between CCAP and the SRC project.

Eligible providers and programs

To be eligible to apply for a School Readiness Service Agreement (SRSA), a child care program was required to fulfill the following requirements:

- Be eligible for child care assistance payments under Minnesota Statutes, chapter 119B
- Have at least 25%¹⁰ of the children enrolled subsidized through the child care assistance program
- Provide full-time, full-year child care services
- Serve at least one child who is subsidized through the child care assistance program and expected to enter kindergarten within the next 30 months.

In 2009, the legislation passed to extend the SRC project for 2 years required that SRC programs participate in Parent Aware¹¹ and obtain a 3- or 4-star rating. Three SRC programs have 4-star ratings as of November 2009. The other 11 programs will participate in Parent Aware over the next 18 months.

Eligible children and families

To be eligible for SRC project services, families had to meet the following criteria:

- Be eligible (and maintain eligibility) to receive child care assistance under any provision in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 119B, except Minnesota Statutes, section 119B.035

¹⁰ The commissioner was able to waive the 25% requirement if necessary to achieve geographic distribution of SRSA providers and diversity of types of care provided by SRSA providers.

¹¹ Parent Aware is a voluntary quality rating system for early care and education programs including licensed family child care programs, child care centers, Head Start, and school-based pre-K programs. Pilot communities were North Minneapolis, the City of Saint Paul, the Wayzata school district, and Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties. Accredited programs in the seven-county metro area are also eligible to participate.

- Be in an authorized activity for an average of at least 35 hours¹² per week when initial eligibility is determined
- Have a child who had not yet entered kindergarten
- Keep their child in child care with the SRSA provider¹³ a minimum of 25 hours per week, on average. A family who moved between counties but continued to use the same SRSA provider would continue to receive SRSA funding for the increased payments.

Exhibit 1. Main Differences Between the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and the School Readiness (SRC) Project

Policy	CCAP	SRC
Maximum rates	Program charges are reimbursed up to the county maximums, which are capped based on legislative direction.	Program charges are reimbursed up to 25% higher than the usual county maximum.
Payment rates	Program cannot charge CCAP families more than they charge non-CCAP families.	Program can request a higher rate than charged to families if services provided for SRC children and families are different from those provided for all families.
Absent days ^a	Absent days are limited to 10 consecutive days and 25 cumulative days per year, unless medical exemption applies.	Absent days are not counted. Child must attend an average of 25 hours per week.
Care authorized	The number of hours of care authorized is tied to parents' schedule of participation in an authorized activity. If parents' hours change, the amount of care authorized may change.	SRC children are authorized for weekly care. If a parent was initially in an authorized activity at least 35 hours per week and the schedule changes (e.g., hours at work decrease), care continues to be authorized for full-time weekly care for up to 12 months. ^b
Ages of eligible children	0–12 years or through age 14 if child has a disability	0–5 years (or until child enters kindergarten)

^aAbsent days refer to the days on which a child is scheduled to attend a child care program but does not attend and for which the child care provider submits a bill for care.

^bDHS changed this requirement in the legislative language for the FY2009 session. Specifically, DHS removed the limitation of “for up to 12 months.” Because of the requirement in the original language, about five families lost their SRC eligibility in January through April 2009.

¹² For the 12 months after initial eligibility was determined, a decrease in the family’s authorized activities to an average of less than 35 hours per week would not affect the child’s eligibility for the SRSA rate as long as the family remained eligible for the CCAP program; Minnesota Statutes 2008, Section 119B.23, subdivision 3.

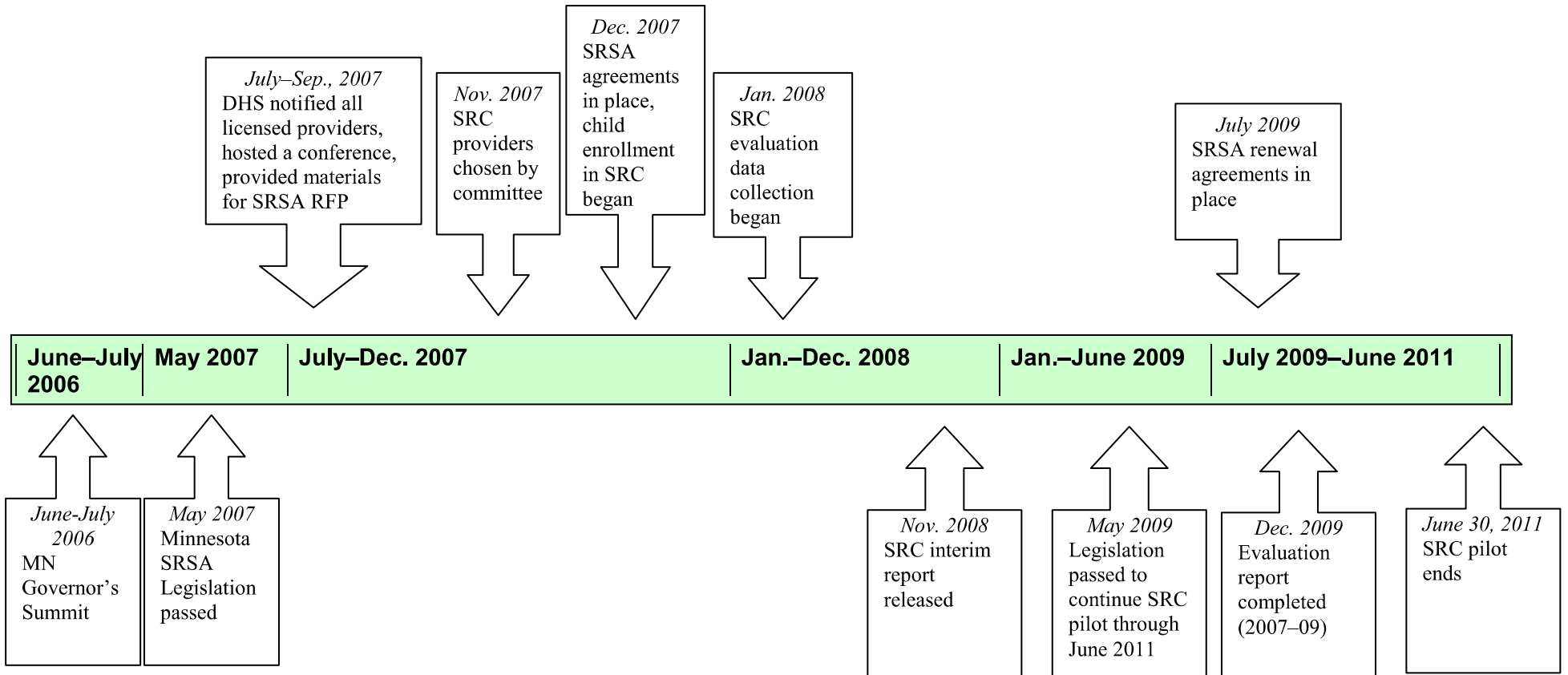
¹³ CCAP and the SRC project refer to the programs they funded as providers. To simplify terminology in this report, we refer to child care center and family child care programs as child care programs and, in most cases, use the term provider to mean the family child care program staff. This list of provider requirements is an exception to that format because the language is taken directly from the SRC legislation.

SRC Project Foundations and Timeline

In planning the design of the SRC project, including the application and Request for Proposals (RFP) process, DHS staff members were able to build on current early childhood research, other projects and evaluations in Minnesota, and the existing DHS infrastructure. Exhibit 2 illustrates the pilot project timeline.

DHS worked with staff members who were developing the Parent Aware rating system to align the SRC provider application with the rating system under construction and to develop criteria to evaluate portions of the SRC project applications. DHS staff also leveraged the existing CCAP authorization and payment processes that all the participating child care programs and counties already use regularly.

Exhibit 2. Timeline of School Readiness Connections Project



Evaluation Questions

DHS hired SRI International to evaluate the SRC pilot project (contract period from July 1, 2008, through December 2009). On the basis of discussions with DHS from February to June 2008, SRI developed an evaluation plan that DHS approved in July 2008. Five evaluation questions¹⁴ were identified for the SRC project.

1. How are SRC funds being used (for how many children and for which children and child care programs)?
2. How do SRC funds interact with other sources of funding?
3. What is the impact of the CCAP SRC project on the quality of care received by participating children and families?
4. What are the school readiness skills and abilities of participating preschool-age children?¹⁵
5. What program policies, training, and administrative practices should be retained or changed if the program were fully implemented?

Methodology

Data are summarized in this final report for the period from December 2007 through June 2009. The SRC project evaluation plan included the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data.

Specifically, for the purpose of the final report, SRI collected and analyzed the following data:

- *Program Surveys.* Web-based surveys¹⁶ of 14 child care program directors and providers about their experiences with the SRC project, conducted twice (August–September 2008 and April–May 2009).
- *Program Interviews.* Telephone interviews with 14 child care program directors and providers about how they used the funds from the SRC, conducted twice (September 2008 and April–May 2009).
- *Administrative Staff Interviews.* Telephone interviews with key staff members at 17 counties and one administering agency about their experiences with the SRC project, conducted twice (September 2008 and April–May 2009).

¹⁴ During the evaluation, DHS conducted a case file review to obtain parent income and activity information for a sample of SRC families. Although not part of the original evaluation questions, these data were analyzed to develop a profile of the families participating in the SRC project.

¹⁵ The evaluation did not aim to directly address the effects of CCAP SRC on child developmental or school readiness outcomes during the 19-month period in which the SRC funds were available. However, assessments of participating preschool-age children's progress in language and literacy, mathematical thinking, and physical and social development were aggregated and reported.

¹⁶ The Minnesota Early Learning Foundation provided SRI with a dataset from the Parent Aware (www.parentawareratings.org) evaluation that included Parent Aware directors' responses to a subset of the questions included in the SRC director/provider web-based survey. These data were used for comparison with the SRC survey data, shown in Appendix B.

- *DHS Staff Interviews.* Telephone interviews with four key DHS staff members about their experiences with the SRC project, conducted twice (September 2008 and April–May 2009).
- *Parent Survey.* Survey that solicited information from parents of children participating in SRC regarding their experiences with CCAP and with the SRC project, their perceptions about their child’s experiences with the SRC project and their child care providers, their child’s development, home literacy practices, and family demographics, conducted once (January–April 2009). Surveys were completed by 145 parents representing 190 children (a response rate of 52% of all the 364 participating children in the SRC project).¹⁷
- *CCAP Administrative Data.* Administrative data on children collected by DHS from county servicing agencies in fall 2008. Information analyzed for this report includes family-level data on parent income and authorized activity from the child’s start in SRC through August 2008 and child-level data on payments and authorized care for February–July 2008. Data were collected on 74% of 364 participating children. Final data were collected once from DHS.
- *SRC Program Reports.* Child care program and provider reports to DHS from January 7 to June 30, 2009, regarding child-level data on attendance, referrals provided, Work Sampling System® (WSS) (Meisels, Marsden, Dichtelmiller, & Dorfman, 2001). assessment data, referrals, and uses of SRC and non-SRC funds to help subsidize the children’s child care. Final data were collected once from DHS.

Findings

Our findings are presented in the following five subsections:

- **Participants in the SRC project.** Characteristics of the children and families, and characteristics of the child care programs are described.
- **Uses of SRC funds and other sources of funds.** This section describes how SRC project funds were used, and the rates of participating programs.
- **Impact of SRC project on children/families and child care programs.** This section summarizes data about , how funds were used to improve the quality of programming for participating children and families, families’ experiences with the SRC project, children’s attendance, and families’ perceptions of their experiences with the SRC project and their child’s provider, based on the parent survey and child care programs’ descriptions of the project’s impact on their activities.
- **School readiness skills of the participating children.** In this section, data are presented on the participating children’s school readiness skills as assessed by the Work Sampling System checklist.
- **Administration and implementation of the SRC project.** This section summarizes findings from interviews about the perceptions of participating DHS, county, and program staff members about how the SRC project was administered and implemented.

¹⁷ In the parent survey, response rates varied by question because some parents did not answer all the questions.

Participants in the SRC Project

Child care providers

Child care providers¹⁸ applied for one of the SRC agreements by submitting an application that the DHS evaluated on the following factors:

- The qualifications of the provider and the provider's staff¹⁹
- The provider's staff-child ratios
- The provider's curriculum¹⁹
- The provider's current or planned parent education activities¹⁹
- The provider's current or planned social service and employment linkages
- The provider's child development assessment plan¹⁹
- The geographic distribution needed for SRC providers (statewide, metro and nonmetro)
- The inclusion of a variety of child care delivery models (e.g., child care centers and family child care programs)
- Other related factors determined by the commissioner (e.g., licensing records).

The legislation and the provider application form also specified other key features of the project. For example, an SRC agreement was required to include assessment, evaluation, and reporting requirements that promote the goals of improved school readiness and movement toward appropriate child development milestones.²⁰ A provider who entered into an SRSA had to comply with the assessment, evaluation, and reporting requirements in the SRSA.

Numbers of participating children and families and types and locations of child care programs

Of the 41 programs that applied, 14 early care and education programs were selected to receive SRC funds for some of their enrolled children. Of these programs, 9 were licensed child care centers, and 5 were licensed family child care programs. All these child care programs participated in this project since its inception.

Exhibit 3 shows the number of children ever enrolled in the SRC project from January 7, 2008, through June 30, 2009, in each of the participating child care programs and the counties where the children live. Estimated costs per child were used to determine the initial number of children who could participate in the SRC project. As the project moved forward, some children were no longer eligible for the project. The available funds were then allotted to other eligible children enrolled with the same or a different CCAP SRC child care provider. The children who participated in the SRC project were enrolled on a rolling basis starting in December 2007. The

¹⁸ CCAP and the SRC project refer to the programs they fund as providers. To simplify terminology in this report, we refer to child care center and family child care programs as child care programs and, in most cases, use the term provider to mean the family child care program staff. This list of provider requirements uses the term provider because that was the language used in the SRC legislation.

¹⁹ The factors used to evaluate School Readiness Connections provider applications align with Parent Aware, Minnesota's pilot quality rating system for child care programs.

²⁰ In the RFP completed by all providers who applied to participate in the SRC project, DHS listed all the tasks and deliverables required of programs that are awarded an SRSA. The complete list is in Appendix A.

data reported here include the period from January 7, 2008, to June 30, 2009. According to the SRC program reports,

- Across all 364 children, the average length of time enrolled in the SRC project was 36 weeks (about 9 months).
- Children’s enrollment ranged from 1 week to 80 weeks (between about 1 and 20 months).

Seventeen counties, one administering agency, and one contracted agency worked with the providers and DHS on the SRC project to verify children’s eligibility and to facilitate payment for services provided.²¹

- There were 14 child care programs (Exhibit 3) that provided child care services for the 364 children who participated²² in the SRC project.
- The participating programs were located in 9 counties across the state of Minnesota (Exhibit 4), with participating children living in 16 counties (Exhibit 5).
 - About half the children (48%) attended a child care center program in Greater Minnesota.
 - Another two-fifths (43%) attended a child care center program in a metropolitan area.
 - The remaining 9% of the children received care from a licensed family care program, located in both metro and Greater Minnesota counties.

²¹ When we refer to “counties,” Lincoln-Lyon Murray is the administrative agency for children in Lyon County. The contracted agency served some children in Hennepin County.

²² In the data export SRI received from DHS, start dates were indicated for 394 children, but attendance records were available for only 364 of those children. Therefore, for the purpose of this report, SRI used only the data from the 364 children who had attendance records.

Exhibit 3. Number of Children Who Participated in the SRC Project from 1/07/08 to 6/30/09 by Child Care Program, Program Type, and Geographic Location (N = 364)

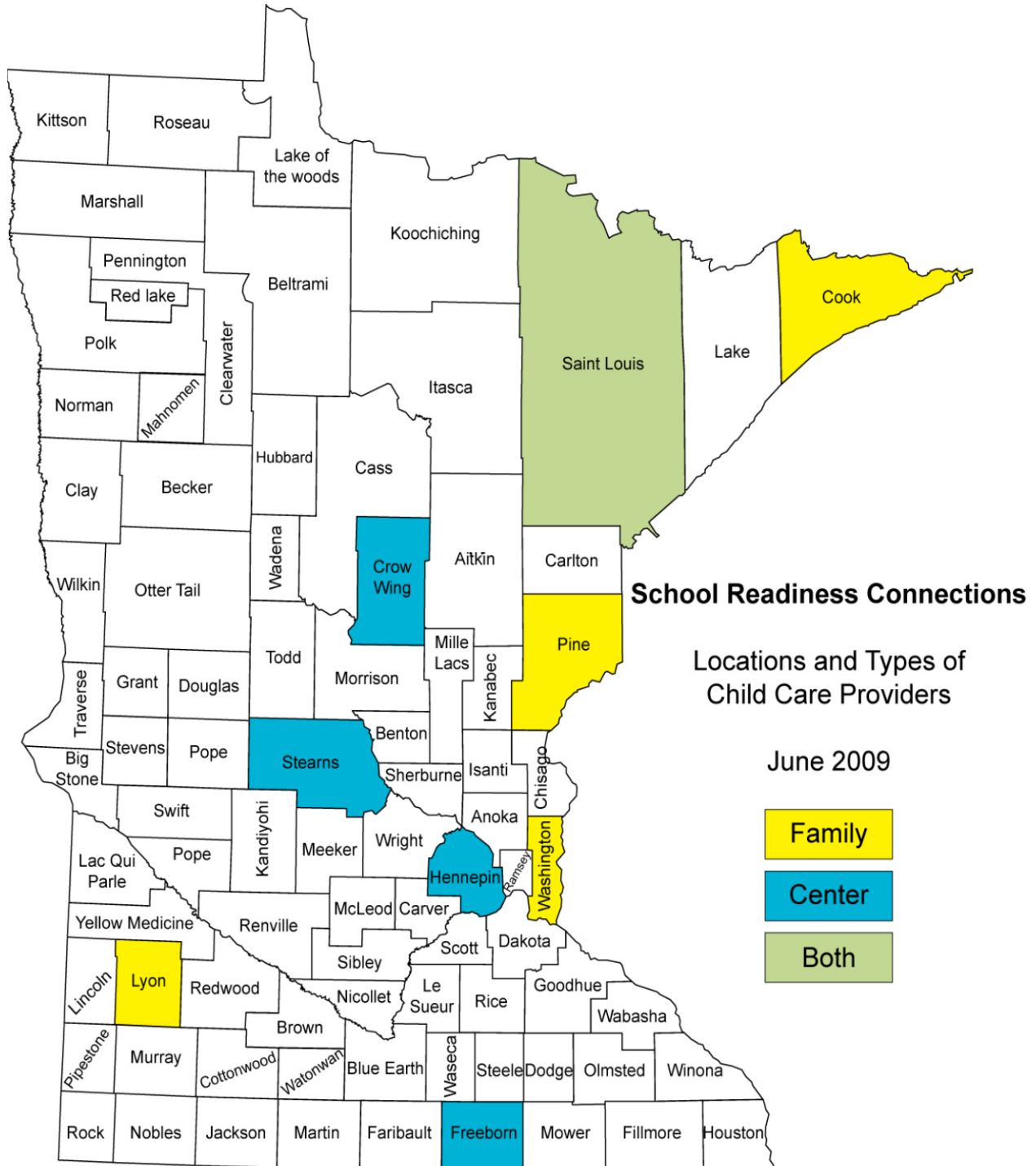
Program type and geographic location ^a	County of residence of SRC children	Number of children	Percentage of children
Metro family child care program (<i>n</i> = 1)		2	1
Family child care program 1	Ramsey	2	1
Metro center-based child care programs (<i>n</i> = 4)		155	43
Child care center program 1	Hennepin	37	10
Child care center program 2	Hennepin	43	12
Child care center program 3	Dakota, Hennepin	45	12
Child care center program 4	Hennepin	30	8
Greater MN family child care programs (<i>n</i> = 4)		31	8
Family child care program 2	St. Louis	10	3
Family child care program 3	Cook	7	2
Family child care program 4	Lincoln-Lyon Murray	5	1
Family child care program 5	Pine, Sherburne	9	2
Greater MN center-based child care programs (<i>n</i> = 5)		176	48
Child care center program 5	St. Louis	33	9
Child care center program 6	St. Louis	40	11
Child care center program 7	Freeborn	36	10
Child care center program 8	Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Stearns	24	6
Child care center program 9	Benton, MilleLacs, Stearns, Wright	43	12
Total		364	100

^a During the application review process DHS selected at least one provider in each of the four categories to ensure diversity in program type and geography.

^b Programs participating in the SRC project were required to submit monthly attendance reports to DHS for each child participating in SRC. Only information about children with at least one attendance record is included in this report.

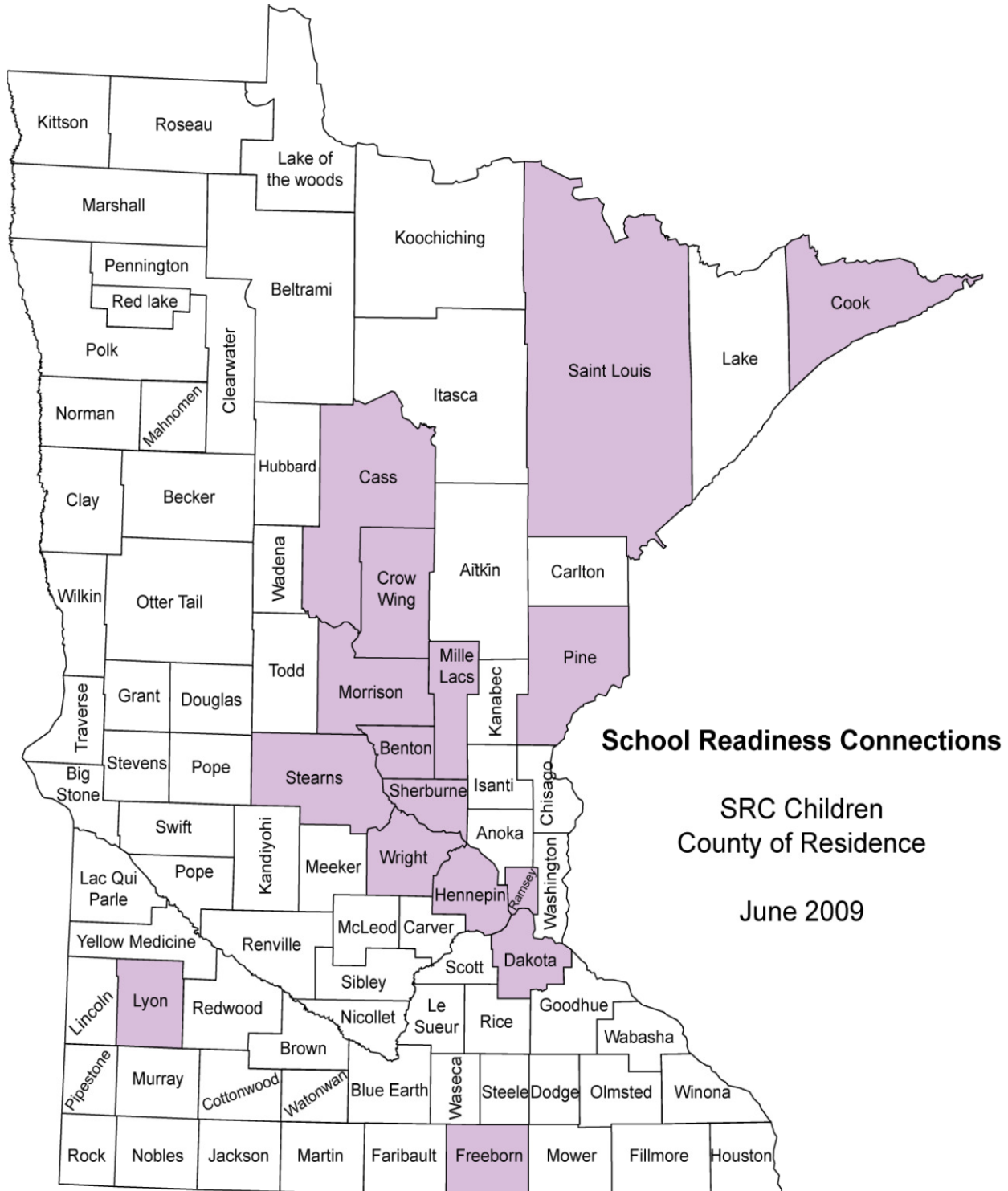
Source: SRC program reports.

Exhibit 4. County Location of SRC Providers by Type of Child Care Program



Note. The two children who resided in Ramsey County attended a child care program in Washington County.
 Source: SRC program reports.

Exhibit 5. Counties Where Participating Children Lived (N = 364)



Source: SRC program reports.

Participating children and families

Participating families had a range of background characteristics. At the time they started participating in the SRC project, children ranged in age from infants to 5 years old (Exhibit 6).

- Not surprisingly, at the end of the SRC project fewer of the participating children were infants (21%) and more of them were 4 and 5 years old (41%) (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6. Ages of Children Participating in the SRC Project (N = 364)

Age	At SRC start date		At SRC end date ^a	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Under 12 months	63	17	15	4
One year	74	20	61	17
Two years	68	19	71	20
Three years	74	20	67	18
Four years	58	16	61	17
Five years	27	7	89	24
Total	364	100	364	100

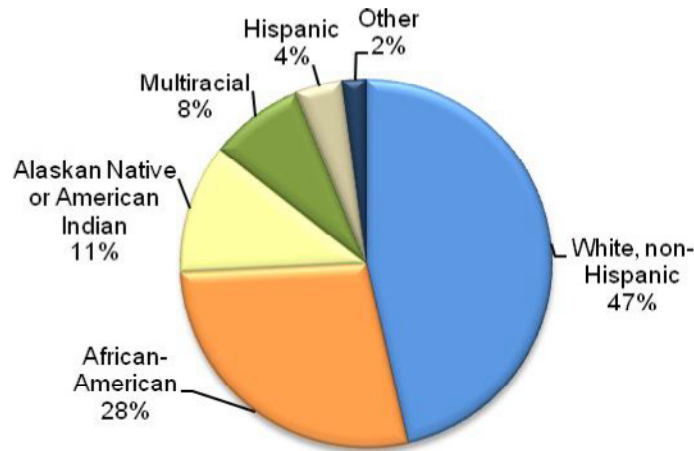
Note. The attendance reporting periods spanned from January 7, 2008, through June 28, 2009.

^a For 178 of the 364 children, a derived end date of 06/30/2009 was used because these children were still attending the child care program in which the SRC project was implemented.

Source: SRC program reports.

- According to the parent survey, most of the parents (74%) reported having only one child in their household who was attending the SRC program, one-fifth of the parents (21%) had two participating children, and only a few parents (5%) had three participating children.
- According to the program surveys, most of the children who participated in the SRC project spoke primarily English (98%). Only a few children (2%) had a language other than English as their primary language, including Spanish, Somali, and other African languages.
- Children who participated in the SRC project represented a range of ethnicities (Exhibit 7).

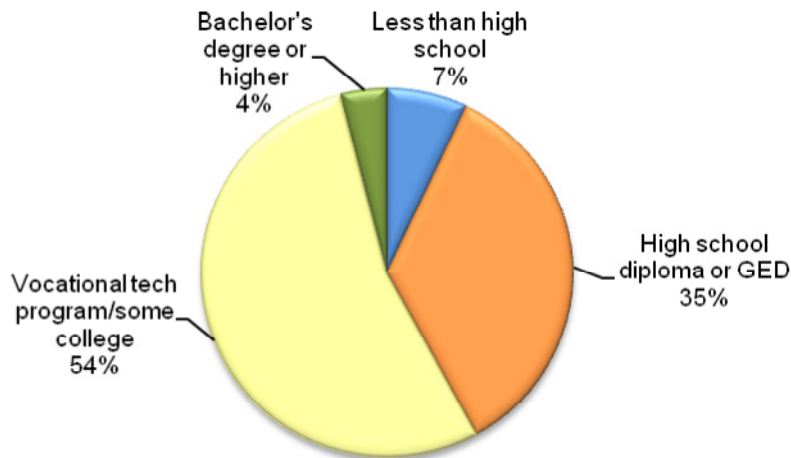
Exhibit 7. Ethnicities of Children Participating in the SRC Project (N = 323)



Source: Program surveys.

- According to the parent survey, education levels of mothers of participating children ranged from less than high school completion (7%) to having a bachelor's degree or higher (4%).
 - Almost all of the mothers (93%) who completed the parent survey had at least a high school diploma or GED (Exhibit 8), with about half the mothers (54%) attending or had attended either a vocational tech program or some college.

Exhibit 8. Education Levels of Mothers of Children Participating in the SRC Project (N = 140)



Source: Parent surveys.

Family income

The CCAP administrative data on household income and required CCAP eligibility activities of participating parents are based on information collected by DHS from county servicing agencies (for $N = 192$ families and $N = 260$ children).

- On average, the families' annual household incomes were \$18,138, with a range from \$0 to \$47,601. According to the MEC² data system, the size of participating families ranged from two persons to a high of eight, with about half having three or four family members in the household (49%).
- According to the CCAP administrative data, families had multiple sources of income that included the following²³:
 - About four-fifths of the families (84%) had income from employment.
 - About one-third of the families (35%) had income from child support payments. Of those families,
 - None received child support for 100% of the time they participated in the SRC project.
 - Two-fifths (39%) received child support 50% or more of the time.
 - A total of 24% of families received MFIP/DWP or some other form of public assistance (e.g., disability payments). Of those families,
 - Only a few (5%) received MFIP or public assistance for 100% of the time they participated in the SRC project.
 - Two-fifths (41%) received MFIP or public assistance 50% or more of the time.
 - The remaining 19% of families had income sources that included tribal payments, unemployment payments, and other sources (e.g., Retirement Survivors Disability Insurance [RSDI]).

CCAP required family activity

According to the CCAP administrative data, programs reported that all participating parents were engaging in required activities to advance their education, employment opportunities, and family self sufficiency.

- A majority of parents (83%) were working at a paid job. Of those families,
 - More than one-quarter (28%) worked 100% time while participating in the SRC project.
 - Two-thirds (65%) worked 50% or more time.
- About one-fifth of parents (21%) were attending classes to further their education toward a GED or higher education. Of those families,
 - One-tenth (10%) attended training or other education 100% of the time they participated in the SRC project.
 - About two-fifths (43%) attended training or other education 50% or more of the time.
- About one-fifth of families (19%) were conducting a job search. Of those families,

²³ These categories are not mutually exclusive and do add up to more than 100%.

- One-tenth (9%) conducted a job search 100% of the time they participated in the SRC project.
- More than one-quarter (28%) conducted a job search 50% or more of the time.
- The remaining 5% of families either volunteered or participated in another activity (e.g., medical leave).

Uses of SRC Funds and Other Sources of Funding

Costs of the SRC project

SRC costs were the difference between the cost of providing care for a child under the general CCAP program and the additional costs of higher rates and more days of child care authorized than a typical CCAP case. The data used for this calculation were the actual payments made for all children ($N = 253$) participating during 6 months of the SRC project (i.e., February–July 2008). The costs that would have been accrued under the general CCAP program were calculated based on an estimation of care that would have been authorized and payments that would have been made under general CCAP policies.

- According to the CCAP administrative data, from February 1 through July 31, 2008, the SRC project cost an **additional** \$242,112 for child care services for a total of 253 children.²⁴ This total expenditure is 33% more than what would have been authorized if the children were receiving only CCAP.
 - Of this total, \$140,588 spent was from Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) Child Care funds (which pay for the child care of families receiving MFIP or DWP and those who have recently left the programs), and \$100,931 was from Basic Sliding Fee (BSF) funds.²⁵
 - The majority of children (62%) received CCAP through MFIP Child Care funds during the SRC project.
 - On average, the cost of child care per week for these children was \$242, which is an **additional** \$56 than the children would have been authorized for under CCAP.
 - More than two-fifths of participating children (41%) received CCAP through BSF funds during the SRC project.²⁶
 - On average, the cost of child care per week for these children was \$215, which is an **additional** \$54 than the children would have been authorized for under CCAP.

For a portion of the payment data included in this analysis (10% of payments made), there was no increase beyond what would have been paid under the general CCAP program.

²⁴ This estimate accounts for only the 253 children for whom DHS provided payment information. No payment information was available for 111 children (31% of the 364 participating children).

²⁵ These totals include only those families for whom an income source was designated. Three families did not have an income source designated, which is why these two totals are \$593 less than the total SRC cost of \$242,112.

²⁶ There were 14 children whose families received both MFIP and BSF at some point during their enrollment in the SRC project, and there were 5 children whose families did not have any funding source program designation.

Increase of maximum rates paid for participating children

In the provider SRC project application, each child care program proposed a rate for the children participating in the SRC project. The rate was discussed between DHS and each child care provider and was based on the providers' rates, the additional services²⁷ that they would provide, and the existing CCAP maximum rate relative to the 25% higher maximum for SRC.

Exhibit 9 shows the participating child care programs' weekly rates for child care. Some child care programs had private pay rates that were above the CCAP SRC maximum at the time of application, and therefore the CCAP SRC maximum rate was applied. Other child care programs were allowed to request up to a 25% increase²⁸ from the applicable CCAP maximum rate if the higher rate reflected the cost of services provided through the CCAP SRC agreement that were not provided when charging the standard rate and if the rate did not exceed the rate that the child care program would charge a private-pay family for the same services provided under the CCAP SRC agreement.

According to the SRC program reports,

- Over half the child care programs (57%) had rates above CCAP maximum rates when the SRC project began, two of five family child care programs and six of nine child care center programs.
- In 2009, more than three-quarters of the child care programs (79%) had rates above the non-SRC CCAP maximum, all five of the family child care programs and six of the nine child care center programs.
- Most of the child care programs (79%) were receiving the maximum SRC rates, which were capped at 25% over the CCAP rate.
- On average, the remaining three child care program SRC rates were between 92% and 99% of the maximum SRC rate.

According to the program surveys of the child care programs,

- Child care center programs were more likely than the family child care programs to have a larger portion of their budget from other additional sources of funding.
- Child care center programs also were more likely to have a greater variety of funding sources.
 - About three-fourths of child care programs (71%) received funding from the Child and Adult Care Food Program and from cash grants or cash donations from foundations (79%).
 - About half the child care programs received funding through fund raising and individual donations (57%) or through federal funds such as Head Start (50%).

²⁷ Half ($n = 7$) of the selected child care programs described on their SRC application a variety of quality enhancement activities that they would undertake using SRC funds (e.g., enhancing their curriculum or learning/environment activities, implementing a child assessment and progress monitoring tool [Ounce Scale] with 0- to 2-year-olds).

²⁸ Those child care programs that already met the standard for accreditation or credentials had a CCAP rate that was 15% higher than that of noncredentialed or accredited programs. This increased rate was used when calculating the increased rate for the SRC project.

- Many more child care center programs than family child care programs (seven out of nine versus one out of five) received funding through fund raising and individual donations.
- Similarly, more child care center programs than family child care programs (five out of nine versus two out of five) received funding from federal sources such as Head Start.
- Only one-fifth of child care programs (21%) received funding from the state or local department of education or school board, and all those programs were child care centers.

Exhibit 9. Weekly Provider Rates of Child Care Programs Participating in the SRC Project

Programs	2009 rate	CCAP maximum	SRC maximum	SRC payment
Family child care program 1 ^a	I 175.00	I 173.65	I 217.06	I 217.06
	T 160.00	T 161.25	T 201.57	T 193.80
	P 150.00	P 155.04	P 193.80	P 193.80
Family child care program 2 ^a	I 174.43	I 155.04	I 193.80	I 193.80
	T 174.43	T 139.54	T 174.43	T 174.43
	P 174.43	P 139.54	P 174.43	P 174.43
Family child care program 3 ^a	I 180.00	I 155.04	I 193.80	I 193.80
	T 180.00	T 155.04	T 193.80	T 193.80
	P 180.00	P 155.04	P 193.80	P 193.80
Family child care program 4 ^a	I 137.50	I 139.54	I 174.43	I 174.43
	T 137.50	T 137.14	T 171.42	T 171.42
	P 137.50	P 137.14	P 171.42	P 171.42
Family child care program 5 ^a	I 154.50	I 154.04	I 193.80	I 190.00
	T 154.50	T 152.38	T 190.47	T 190.00
	P 154.50	P 152.38	P 190.47	P 190.00
Child care center program 1 ^a	I 404.54	I 306.36	I 382.95	I 382.95
	T 385.28	T 251.78	T 314.73	T 314.73
	P 308.22	P 228.22	P 285.27	P 285.27
Child care center program 2 ^a	I 404.54	I 306.36	I 382.95	I 382.95
	T 385.28	T 251.78	T 314.73	T 314.73
	P 308.22	P 228.22	P 285.27	P 285.27
Child care center program 3 ^a	I 312.00	I 306.36	I 382.95	I 375.00
	T 260.00	T 251.78	T 314.73	T 310.00
	P 229.00	P 228.22	P 285.27	P 280.00
Child care center program 4	I 266.40	I 266.40	I 333.00	I 333.00
	T 218.94	T 218.94	T 273.68	T 273.68
	P 198.45	P 198.45	P 248.06	P 248.06
Child care center program 5 ^a	I 176.25	I 182.85	I 228.56	I 211.25
	T 171.25	T 173.71	T 217.13	T 206.25
	P 161.25	P 167.61	P 209.52	P 196.25
Child care center program 6	I 176.25	I 159.00	I 198.75	I 198.75
	T 171.25	T 151.05	T 188.81	T 188.81
	P 161.25	P 145.75	P 182.19	P 182.19
Child care center program 7	I 230.00	I 146.28	I 182.85	I 182.85
	T 200.00	T 128.26	T 160.33	T 160.33
	P 170.00	P 107.06	P 133.83	P 133.83
Child care center program 8	I 160.00	I 121.34	I 151.68	I 151.68
	T 150.00	T 121.34	T 151.68	T 151.68
	P 143.00	P 118.65	P 148.31	P 148.31
Child care center program 9 ^a	I 187.00	I 198.46	I 248.07	I 248.07
	T 165.00	T 167.44	T 209.30	T 209.30
	P 155.00	P 159.39	P 199.24	P 199.24

Note: I = Infant, T = Toddler, P = Preschool. Source: SRC program reports.

^a These child care providers had a 15% higher CCAP maximum rate and a 15% higher SRC maximum rate because they were accredited or had the required credentials. The entire rate is reflected in this exhibit.

Impact of the SRC Project on Child Care Programs and Children/Families

Quality improvement activities by child care programs

During the application process, DHS purposefully selected child care programs to participate in the SRC project based on the services and activities that they were already delivering to children and families (e.g., use of an evidence-based curriculum, referrals for children and families to needed community resources, parent engagement activities). The increased reimbursement rate from the SRC project was expected to help pay for such costs as the following:

- Training to use the Work Sampling System (WSS) checklists and conduct child assessments
- Making referrals for developmental screening and other services and assessments
- Implementing parent engagement efforts
- Helping to improve the overall quality of the services and supports offered
- Paying for administrative time for conducting the project and complying with the SRC requirements and reporting.

In the program surveys, child care programs reported that they had implemented the following types of quality improvement activities using the SRC funds:

- All the child care programs (100%) used some SRC funds for **family partnerships**. Most child care programs (93%) used SRC funds for materials to support staff-parent interactions and home learning (e.g., newsletters, food for meetings, handouts, home learning activities, and books for families to read at home). Almost four-fifths of the child care programs used funds to increase staff time to communicate with families (79%) and to allow staff time for family support (79%). More than half the programs (57%) dedicated time for staff training in working with families.
- All 14 of the child care programs used some SRC funds for **teaching materials and strategies**. Almost all the child care programs used SRC funds for training in use of curriculum or other early learning approaches for use with the children (93%) and for consultation on curriculum. Almost three-fourths of child care programs (71%) used SRC funds to purchase teaching materials, predominantly curricula, supplies, early literacy tools, and miscellaneous toys and activities. Half the child care programs (50%) used SRC funds for consultation on teaching materials and strategies, whereas about one-fifth (14%) provided ongoing monthly coaching sessions with classroom teachers.
- Almost two-thirds of the child care programs (64%) used some SRC funds for **tracking learning**. Half the child care programs used SRC funds for training (50%) on such topics as staff coaching and training on curriculum. About one-fifth of child care programs (14%) used SRC funds for materials, including assessment tools and classroom items, such as paper and glue; and about one-fifth of child care programs (14%) used SRC funds for consultation on the WSS assessments.
- Almost three-fourths of the child care programs (71%) used some SRC funds for **teacher training and education**. Over half the child care programs (57%) used SRC funds for college tuition or other professional development training for their staff. More than one-third used SRC funds for fees for special licenses or credentials (36%) or for books or other materials needed for coursework (36%).

- Almost all of the child care programs (93%) used some SRC funds for **other activities**. Nearly two-thirds (64%) used SRC funds to pay for substitute teachers. Other uses of the SRC funds included increased salary/benefits for staff (36%), additional staff or additional staff hours (36%), and improvement to the daycare facility/home (29%).

Impact of the SRC project on children/families

The SRC project funding enabled child care programs to enhance the services and supports they provided children and families. The impacts included the following:

- Increasing the amount and continuity of care
- Improving child care center program staff's and family child care providers' ability to make and follow through on referrals to other services and supports for children and families
- Supporting communication between child care providers and parents to support children's early learning
- Supporting the implementation of child assessment and progress monitoring.

In this section, data about the authorization of additional care under SRC policies, children's eligibility for CCAP and attendance with SRC providers are summarized. Data about provider referrals and parent's perceptions of referrals and attendance requirements are summarized next. Results about parents' perceptions of the SRC project and their child care provider are presented last.

Continuity of care

For children participating in SRC, care was authorized on a weekly basis for up to 12 months²⁹ as long as the family retained eligibility for the general CCAP program. SRC funds could be used to pay for up to a full week of care minus the cost of care that would have been authorized under the general CCAP program. From the CCAP administrative data for children participating in SRC from February to July 2008 ($N = 252$), the following care differentials were found:

- The majority of the children (87%) were not authorized for more care than they would have been under the general CCAP program.
- The 13% of children who received more hours of child care (1 to 342 hours, less than 1 day through 2.5 months) are distributed in the following way:
 - 8% received an additional 1 or more days per week of child care.
 - 5% received less than 1 day per week of additional child care.

Ongoing eligibility for CCAP SRC

SRC project participation ends when a child begins kindergarten, leaves care with a selected SRC child care program (the child may continue to participate in the general CCAP program), or the family loses eligibility for the general CCAP program. Children and families may lose eligibility for the general CCAP program for a number of reasons including exceeding income eligibility limits, reduction in work hours below 20 hours per week, and parental noncompliance with their employment plan (MFIP and DWP child care only).

²⁹ DHS made changes to this requirement in the legislative language for the FY2009 session. In this update, DHS removed the limitation of "for up to 12 months."

According to the program surveys, about two-fifths of the 14 child care programs (43%) reported that some families had difficulty maintaining their SRC eligibility. Of the children who left the SRC project,

- Almost one-third (32%) left because they lost CCAP eligibility.
- More than one-quarter (27%) left because they went to kindergarten.
- Almost one-fifth (18%) left because the family moved.

In addition to those children whose participation in the SRC project ended when the family lost CCAP eligibility, SRC providers also reported instances when a child was temporarily not attending the SRC program because the family had lost CCAP eligibility. These children were ineligible for care for short periods of time or were later retroactively authorized for care during the time in question and returned to care with the SRC provider.

In the parent survey, parents were asked about their CCAP eligibility experiences during the previous 12 months. (For most responding parents, children were participating in SRC for only a portion of that period.) On the basis of the responses to the parent survey,

- Almost one-third of the families participating in the SRC project (30%) lost CCAP eligibility at least once in the past year. Of these families,
 - Most (85%) lost it only once or twice, but the remaining 15% of parents lost CCAP eligibility between three and six times in the past year.
 - The most common reasons for losing CCAP eligibility included the following³⁰:
 - The paperwork was not completed or late, 60%
 - Stopped working or going to school the necessary hours, 43%
 - Job search hours ran out, 10%
 - Income was too high, 10%
 - Other, 7% (e.g., medical leave, moved out of the county).
 - Almost half the parents (45%) who lost CCAP eligibility in the past year were able to resolve the issue within 2 weeks.
 - Other parents who lost CCAP eligibility had a longer wait for the issue to be resolved, with almost one-third of them (30%) waiting 1 month and one-quarter (25%) waiting more than a month.
 - About three-fifths of the parents (60%) who had difficulty maintaining CCAP eligibility in the past year resolved the issue themselves by either submitting the necessary paperwork or going back to school or work.
 - More than half the parents (55%) reported that they sometimes or often received help from their SRC child care program staff for issues related to their CCAP eligibility.
 - Only a small number of parents (17%) said they had never received help from the SRC child care program for issues related to their CCAP eligibility.

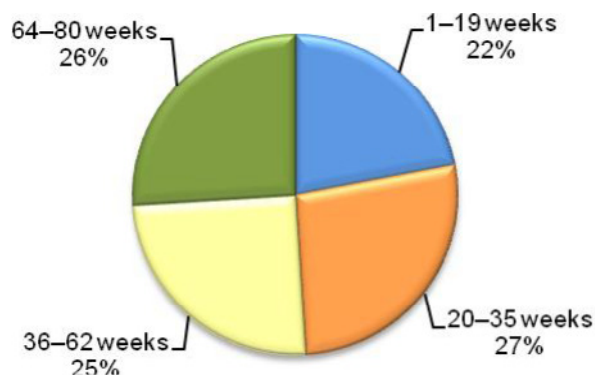
According to the SRC program reports, the children who participated in the SRC project were enrolled on a rolling basis starting December 2007. The data reported here include the period from January 7, 2008, to June 30, 2009.

³⁰ The categories for why families lost eligibility are not mutually exclusive and thus total more than 100%.

- Across all 364 children, the average length of time enrolled³¹ in the SRC project was 36 weeks (about 9 months).
- Children’s enrollment ranged from 1 week to 80 weeks³² (between less than 1 month and 21 months) (Exhibit 10).

The duration of participation in the SRC project varied. The maximum number of weeks a child could have participated in the SRC project during the evaluation period included in this report was 84 weeks (21 months).

**Exhibit 10. Number of Weeks Children Were Enrolled in the SRC Project (N = 363)
(Between January 7, 2008, and June 30, 2009)**



Source: SRC program reports.

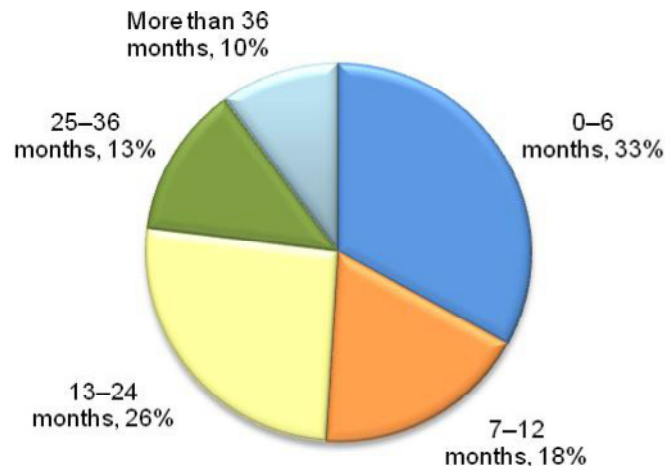
Almost all the children (99%) participating in the SRC project were already enrolled in CCAP before the beginning of the SRC project. The length of time they had been in CCAP prior to SRC varied from less than 1 month to 63 months (Exhibit 11).

- About one-third of children (33%) had been enrolled in CCAP before the SRC project for less than 6 months, with about one-fifth (18%) enrolled for 7–12 months.
- About one-fourth (26%) had been previously enrolled in CCAP for 13–24 months, and almost one-fourth for 25 months or longer (23%).

³¹ In this section, we report on enrollment, which is the length of time the child was eligible for the SRC project; in the next section, we report on attendance, which is the number of weeks the child actually attended the SRC child care provider’s program, for at least 25 hours in a week.

³² According to provider report, some children were temporarily ineligible for SRC for short periods of time, this data does not reflect those periods of temporary ineligibility.

Exhibit 11. Number of Weeks Children Were Enrolled in CCAP Before Participating in the SRC Project (N = 245) (Between January 7, 2008, and June 30, 2009)



Source: SRC program reports.

Children's attendance

The available attendance data from the SRC program reports for the period of January 7, 2008, through June 30, 2009, were reviewed and summarized. Children were expected to attend their child care program for an average of 25 hours per week for every week that they met CCAP eligibility requirements. The attendance data show, out of the number of weeks that the child was eligible for the SRC project how many weeks the child actually attended.

- Children were reported to be attending the SRC project from between 1 and 76 weeks (<1 to 19 months).³³
 - A little more than half of the children (51%) attended the SRC project for 32 or more weeks (8 months or more).
 - One-quarter of the children (25%) attended the SRC project for 55 or more weeks (14 months or more).

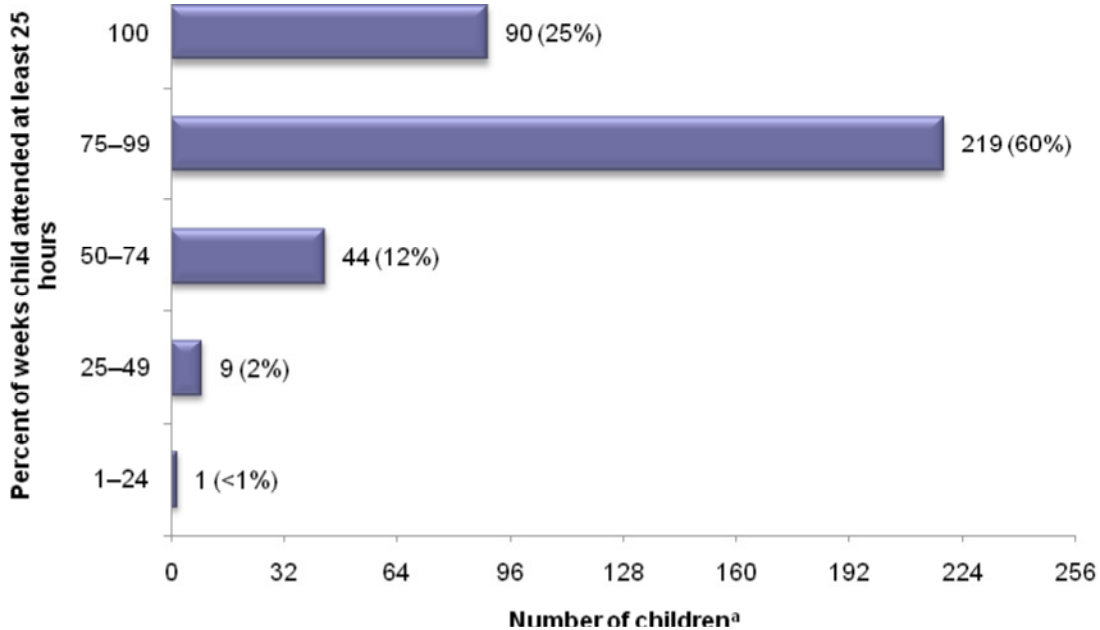
Exhibit 12 shows the children's attendance rates based on the total number of weeks they were eligible for the SRC project.

- Most of the children (85%) attended for at least 25 hours per week for most of the weeks (75 to 100%) that they were eligible (Exhibit 12).
 - One-quarter of children (25%) attended the SRC project for at least 25 hours per week for every week that they were eligible.
 - Another three-fifths of the children (60%) attended for at least 25 hours per week for 75% to 99% of the weeks that they were eligible.
 - Another 12% of the children attended for at least 25 hours per week for between 50% and 74% of the weeks that they were eligible.
- Less than 1% were in attendance for at least 25 hours per week for 1% to 24% of the weeks they were eligible.

³³ The total number of weeks children attended (76) is less than the total number of weeks children were enrolled (80) because not all children attended for all the weeks they were eligible.

- As of June 30, 2009, about half of the children who ever participated in the SRC project (51%) were no longer participating in it.

Exhibit 12. Children’s Child Care Program Attendance, Based on Total Weeks of CCAP Eligibility (N = 364)



^a Children’s attendance rates are based on the total number of weeks that they were eligible for the SRC project. Source: SRC program reports.

According to the program surveys,

- Almost three-quarters of the child care programs (71%) reported that some of their SRC-funded children were routinely late or absent from child care; all the programs addressed this with parents. Most of those child care programs (8 of 10) were child care center programs.
- A few of the children eligible for SRC lost eligibility because of the 25-hour attendance requirement.

Referrals for children and families

According to the provider surveys and interviews, the SRC program application criteria included how well the child care program was connected to other services and supports within the community. All the child care programs selected for the SRC project had experience with facilitating referrals that help meet their families’ needs.

- About one-third of the child care programs (36%) had a designated staff person whose primary responsibility was to work with the families to discuss any needs they might have, review any relevant program observations, and make referrals as needed. In the other programs, regular staff members conducted these activities.
- Child care programs facilitated referrals for children and families in several different ways.

- Most of child care programs (86%) met with parents and staff of the agency the referral was made to, called the referral agency to discuss the family (79%), and contacted the agency after the referral to follow up that the parent met with the agency (79%).
- Nearly three-fourths of the child care programs (71%) facilitated referrals by completing release of information forms.
- A few of the child care programs (14%) provided transportation for families to the referral sites.
- According to the SRC program reports, between January 7, 2008, and June 30, 2009, 55 of the 364 children (15%) received a referral from the SRC child care programs. Of those 55 children referred,
 - Almost two-thirds (62%) were 3 years old and older.
 - About half (47%) received a referral for developmental screening. (Children can be referred to developmental screenings beginning at age 2.5.)
 - The others included both parent- and family-focused and child-focused referrals.
 - Examples of parent- and family-focused referrals are employment assistance, higher education scholarships, and housing assistance.
 - Examples of child-focused referrals are assistance for transitioning to kindergarten, Head Start/Early Head Start, and hearing screenings.

According to the program interviews, as a result of the referrals, some of the children were found to be eligible for specific services, and the child care programs worked with those service providers to ensure they maintained good communication.

- As a result of the SRC project, the child care programs reported that they had strengthened their established referral resources and reached out to more families to offer support.
- Although child care programs had not made many referrals over the course of the SRC project (55 of 364 children, 15%), overall staff members were pleased with the referrals they had made.
 - All child care programs reported that they already had a good understanding of how to determine the needs of the child and family and that they regularly referred children to the appropriate providers (examples presented in Exhibit 13).
 - Some child care programs had a book or database of local referrals to help select the appropriate referral for the family and child.
 - Child care programs appreciated when parents brought in their service plan so the staff could help the family work on the plan in their program.
- Child care programs reported several types of challenges in facilitating referrals, including the following:
 - Families needing transportation to the referral agency
 - Poor local referral network
 - Long waiting list for some services
 - Child or family found to be ineligible for service
 - Parents not able to follow through with referrals.

Exhibit 13. Examples of Facilitation of Referrals by Child Care Programs

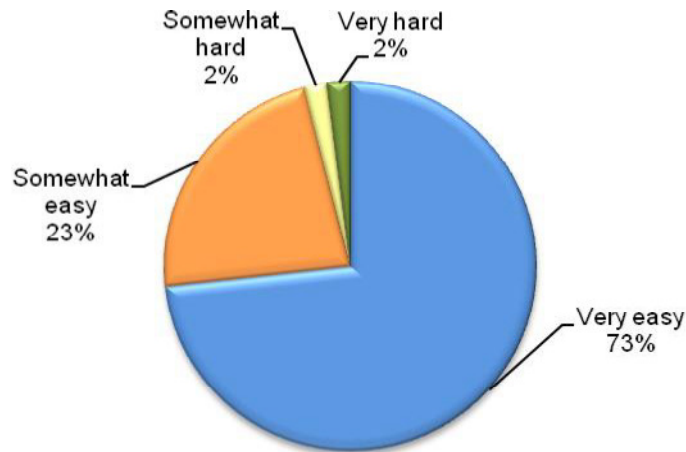
1. To provide screenings for the children in the child care program, “we bring people in, for example, Minneapolis Public Schools for a half-day [to conduct] screenings, and we allowed parents to sign up for the screenings.”
2. When children begin attending this child care program, “we ask parents to sign a permission form to allow our speech therapist to do a brief speech evaluation...if she does think a child needs extra services, she either puts information into the child’s cubby or calls the parent about a referral.”
3. “I had a client who lost her job and needed another one. We used the employment resource center and she was able to get help finding a job that she liked, and the employer likes her. She has gone from part-time to full-time employment and the employer is very pleased with her work there.”

Source: Program interviews

According to the parent survey,

- Almost all parents who received a referral (96%) thought the process for following up on referrals for the services their children or family needs was easy or very easy (Exhibit 14).
- All 55 families who reported on their satisfaction of the referrals received said that they were satisfied, with most of those families (73%) reporting that they were very satisfied.
- A total of 45 families reported that they needed assistance from their SRC provider to facilitate the referral, and all of them received the needed assistance.

Exhibit 14. Parents’ Report of Ease of the Referral Process (N = 55)



Source: Parent surveys.

Families' experiences and satisfaction with the SRC project and their child care provider

The parent survey data were used to understand how the SRC project affected families. A total of 145 parents representing 190 children (52% response rate) completed the survey. Of those who completed the survey,

- Almost all respondents (99%) were parents, and 1% were grandparents.
- Two-thirds of respondents (64%) were White, about one-third were African American (31%), and the remaining were American Indian (12%), Hispanic (7%), African (4%), Asian (2%), and Pacific Islander and other (2%).
- The primary home language was English for 92% of the respondents.
- The ages of the children of the survey respondents were similar to the entire sample. Of the children of those respondents,
 - 16% were less than 2 years old.
 - 21% were 2 years old.
 - 17% were 3 years old.
 - 16% were 4 years old.
 - 30% were 5 years or older.

The parent survey responses indicated that overall parents were very pleased with the SRC project because it provided a safe and educational place for their children to be while they needed to work, go to school, or take care of daily needs.

- Almost all of the parents reported that it was easy (97%) to understand the SRC project information given to them at the beginning of the project.
- The majority of parents (76%) reported that they were receiving as much information about their children's development as they would like, whereas one-fifth of the parents said they received some information about their children's development (20%) but they would like more, and only a few parents (4%) stated that they did not receive any information.
- Almost half the parents (46%) reported that their child was able to attend the child care program more hours because of the SRC project.
- More than one-quarter of parents did not think their children were able to attend more hours (27%) because of the SRC project, whereas the same percentage of parents were unsure (27%).
- Almost all the families whose children did receive more hours (91%) thought the full week of child care helped them and their children a lot.
 - About half of those families (53%) explained how the full week of care had helped them, with the most common responses being
 - The parent is able to go to work (45%).
 - The children are receiving good quality child care and education (38%).
 - The parent is able to get things done outside of school and work (23%).
 - The parent is able to go to school (19%).
- Most families (85%) reported that they did not have any difficulty keeping the child in the child care program for at least 25 hours per week.

- However, a few families had a little difficulty (14%), and a small number of families (1%) had a lot of difficulty keeping the child in the child care program for at least 25 hours per week.
- Most of the families (86%) thought that the SRC should continue the 25 or more hours per week requirement.
 - Less than half the families (42%) explained why they thought the SRC project should continue the 25 hours of child care per week requirement. Of these families, the reasons given by 61 parents included the following:
 - The children were receiving good quality child care and education.
 - The parent was able to work.
 - Parents who participated in the SRC project should be required to be working or going to school at least those 25 hours the child is in child care.
 - The children who needed this project the most should receive it.
 - The parent was able to attend school.
- The reasons given by the 14% of parents who reported that they did not like the 25 hour per week attendance requirement included the following:
 - The parents had other plans for the week.
 - The parents were just not able to get the child to the program consistently for at least 25 hours per week for reasons such as transportation barriers.

In the parent survey, parents also reported a high degree of satisfaction about their experiences with their SRC providers and the SRC project. Across these responses, it is clear that parents were quite pleased with the SRC project and its benefits for them and their children.

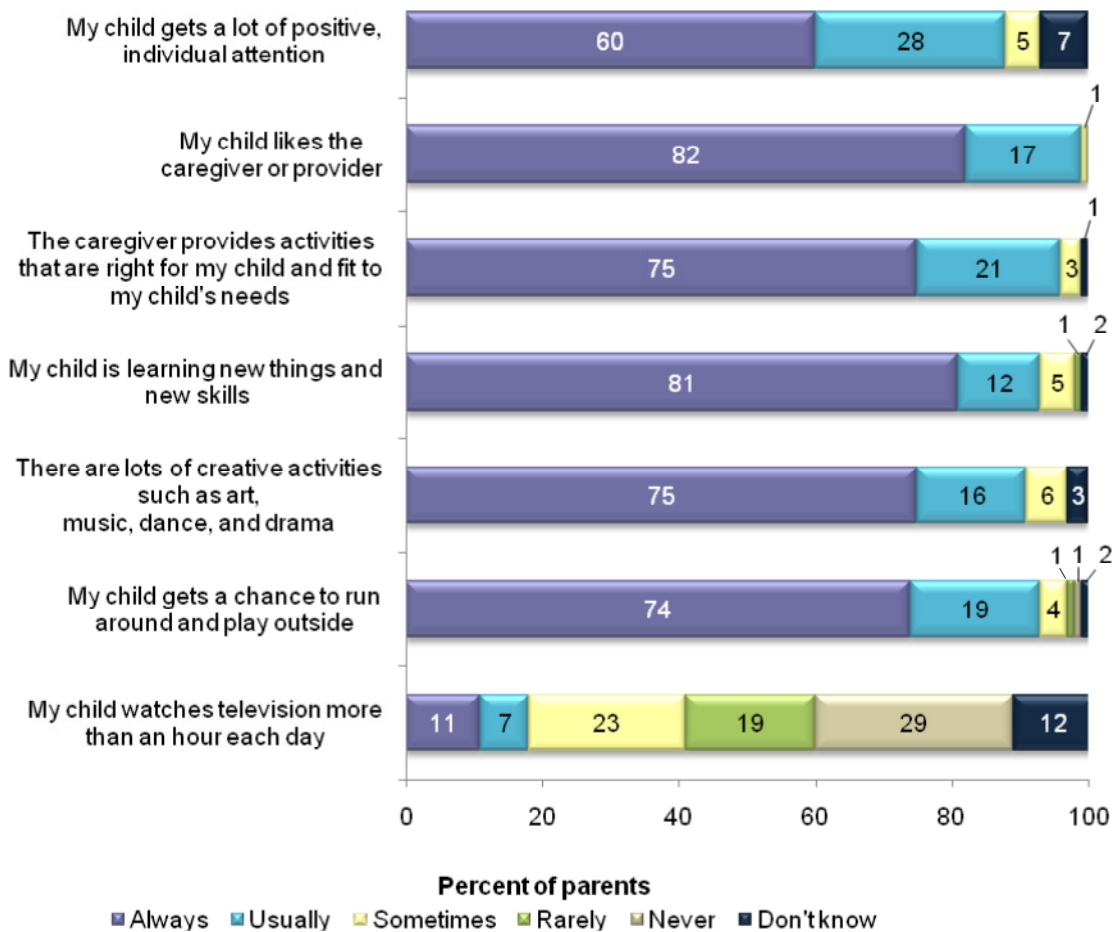
- All parents who completed the survey ($n = 145$) said they were satisfied with their SRC program or provider, with a majority of the parents saying they were very satisfied (87%) and the remaining 13% responding they were satisfied.

According to the program surveys, almost three-fourths (70%) of children enrolled in the SRC project had been previously enrolled at that same provider through CCAP, whereas less than one-tenth of children (9%) had other child care arrangements before enrollment in the SRC project.

According to the parent survey, most parents felt that their children had a good provider that cared for them and offered a variety of educational opportunities for their children to grow (Exhibit 15).

- The majority of the parents (88%) reported that their child either always or usually got a lot of positive individual attention from the provider and that the child liked the provider (99%).
- Almost all of the parents (96%) reported that the caregiver provided activities that were right for their children and fit their children's needs.
- Almost all parents also reported that the programs always or usually helped the child learn new skills (93%), had creative activities such as art and music (91%), and gave the child a chance to play outside (93%).

Exhibit 15. Parents' Perceptions of Children's Experiences at the Child Care Program (N = 162)

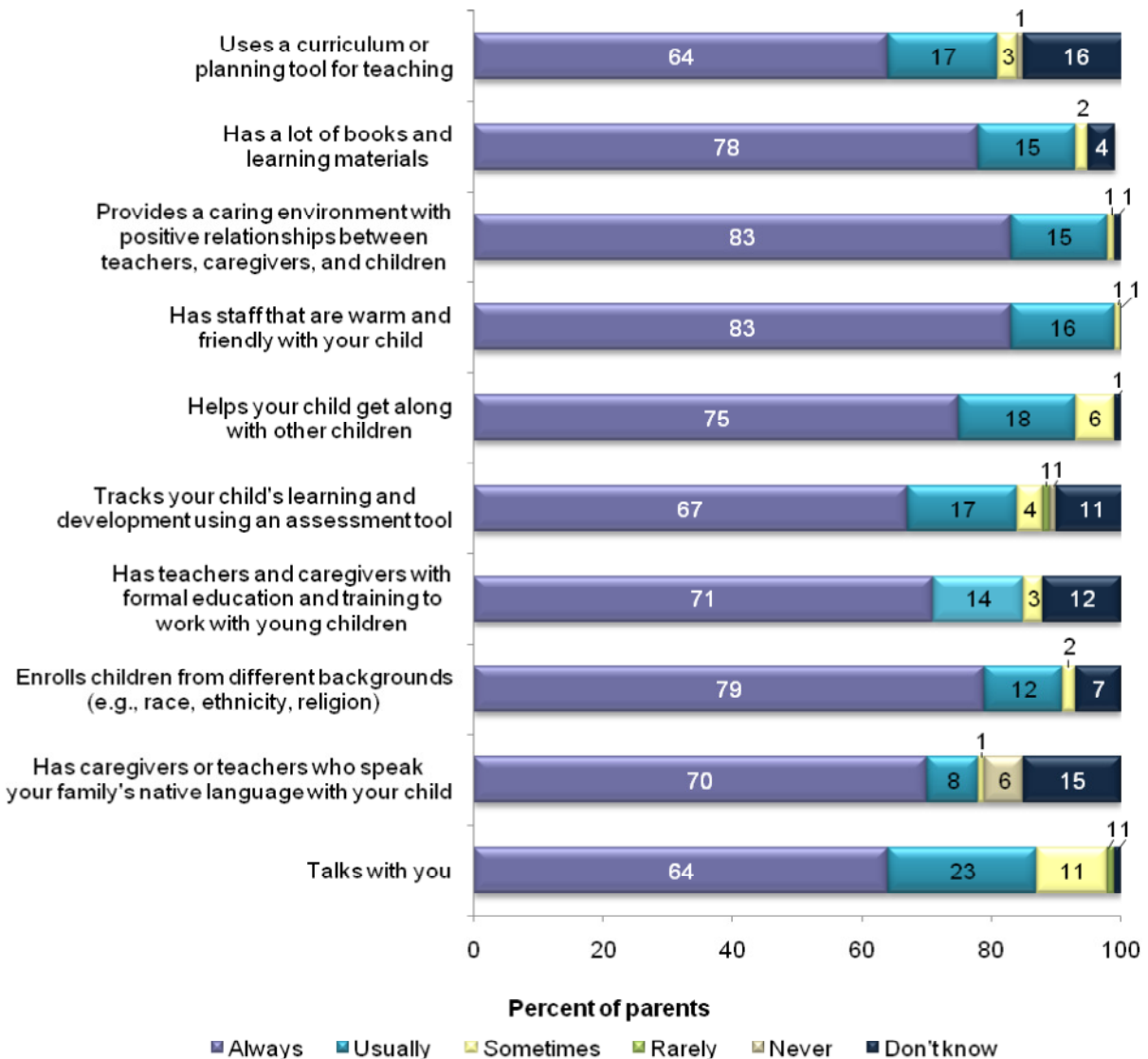


Source: Parent surveys.

In the parent survey, parents reported that the SRC programs frequently engaged in activities that are indicators of a high-quality learning environment (Exhibit 16).

- Most parents reported that the program always or usually used a curriculum or other planning tool (81%) and had a lot of books and learning materials (93%).
- Most parents reported that the staff members always or usually were warm and friendly to their children (99%); the program provided a caring environment with positive relationships between teachers, caregivers, and children (98%); and the staff helped their children get along with other children (93%).
- Most parents reported that the staff always or usually used assessment tools to track the child's learning (84%) and had teachers or providers who had formal education or training to work with young children (85%).
- Most parents (87%) reported that the staff members always or usually talked with them.

Exhibit 16. Parents' Report of Frequency of Activities by the SRC Program Staff or Provided (N = 162)



Source: Parent surveys.

In the parent survey, many parents reported that the child care program had helped their child develop critical skills (for children ages 3–5 years).

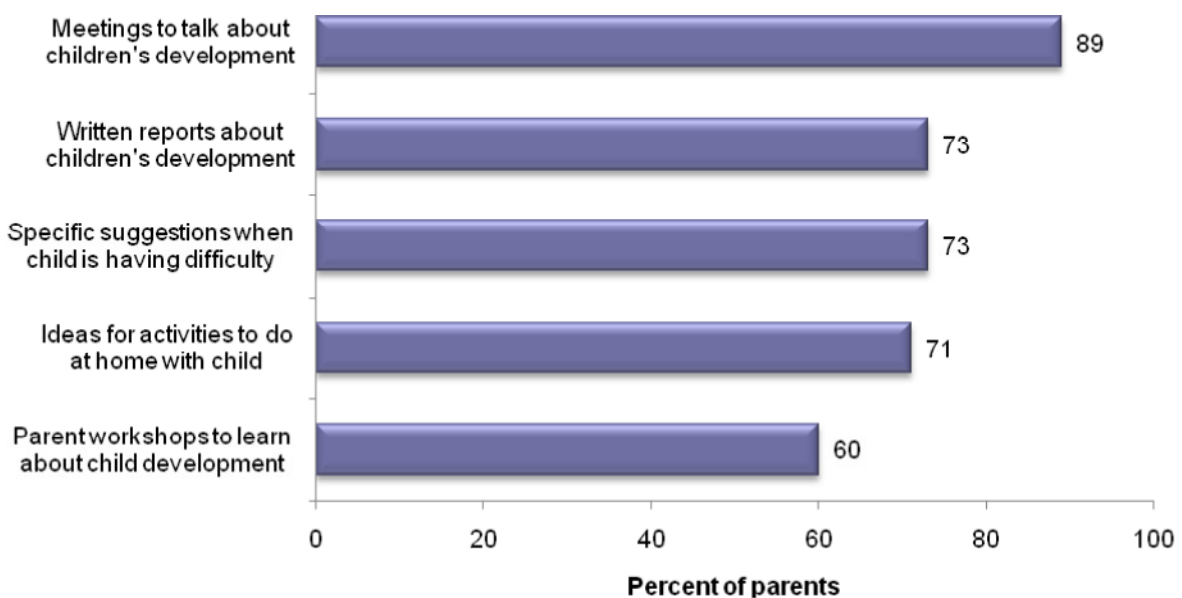
- Almost three-fourths of parents (72%) reported that the programs helped develop the child’s social skills.
- About two-thirds of parents reported that the programs helped develop the child’s self-help skills (such as dressing, feeding, toileting) (68%), language skills (65%), school skills (64%), and reading skills (63%).³⁴

³⁴ One-fifth of the parents who completed this survey (20%) said that these skills did not apply because their child was younger than 3 years old.

According to the parent surveys, SRC programs provided a range of helpful parenting support activities and information (Exhibit 17).

- Almost all the parents (96%) reported that their children’s child care program offered parent support activities and information.
- The most common parent support activity was meeting to talk with the teacher about the children’s development (89%).
- Child care programs also commonly provided parents with written reports about the child’s development (73%), suggestions when the child was having difficulty (73%), and ideas for activities to do at home with the child (71%).

Exhibit 17. Parents’ Report of Support Activities and Information Provided by SRC Child Care Programs (N = 151)



Source: Parent surveys.

On the parent survey, parents made many comments attesting to the benefits of the SRC program (Exhibit 18).

Exhibit 18. Parents' Comments about Benefits of the SRC Project

"As a single working mother, I want what is best for my son while I work. My SRC provider has shown all of the qualities I feel my son deserves such as: reading/writing skills, self-help skills, nutrition, structure, genuine caring, and a lot more. SRC is a great and necessary program."

"I am very pleased to be able to have child care assistance. I wouldn't be able to afford child care if it wasn't available. As for my provider I have had all 3 of my children attend [this provider] and I wouldn't want them to be anywhere else."

The provider "is very nice, the girls really enjoy going there. Their social skills have improved wonderfully since they have started there."

From the SRC child care program, "I get help with many resources and I learn how to be a better parent and I have higher goals in life."

The SRC child care program "helps my child learn and develop skills."

The SRC child care provider "is very nice and kind. She is wonderful with my daughter. [She] teaches her discipline and does really fun activities with the kids. I love bringing projects home."

The child care program is a "very welcoming environment, [with] lots of children around my child's age. [I] love that they have a computer that children can [use], [we] can't afford [a computer] at home, but it's important to learn about computers."

The child care program "staff is very experienced and well organized."

The child care program has "a lot of different activities [for the children.]"

Source: Parent survey.

Child assessment and progress monitoring

Child care programs participating in the SRC project were required to use the Work Sampling System (WSS) checklist as a tool for child assessment and progress monitoring for children 1 and 2 years before kindergarten (i.e., ages 3–5).³⁵ For the evaluation of this project, child assessment results were aggregated across participating child care programs. This approach required that programs use the same assessment tool and that child care staff be well trained in its use.

The WSS was selected because it is designed to be used to evaluate children as they engage in their everyday activities and to be used to identify and inform instruction and educational activities. The WSS is a systematic approach to evaluating a teacher or provider's observations about children using research-based developmental guidelines. WSS also includes guidance in promoting communication between providers and families about children's interests, development, and learning. The Preschool 3 and Preschool 4 developmental guidelines of the WSS are on the list of Parent Aware-approved instructional child assessments.³⁶ In addition, an

³⁵ The WSS contains seven domains, but child care programs were required to complete and submit children's assessments for only four of these domains: Personal and Social Development, Language and Literacy, Mathematical Thinking, and Physical Development and Health.

³⁶ Guidelines about the WSS can be found on the Parent Aware website, www.parentawareratings.org/providers-educators/download/Approved_assessments.pdf.

adapted version of the WSS checklist is the tool used to evaluate the skills and abilities of kindergartners in the Minnesota School Readiness Study (Minnesota Department of Education, 2008).

All SRC family child care providers and lead preschool teachers attended trainings sponsored by DHS or attended other sessions offered by the Minnesota Department of Education. DHS provided checklists, classroom charts, Preschool 3 (for use with 3-year-olds) and Preschool 4 (for use with 4-year-olds) developmental guidelines, the Work Sampling teacher's manual and the companion resource books, *The Power of Observation* and *Winning Ways to Learn*.

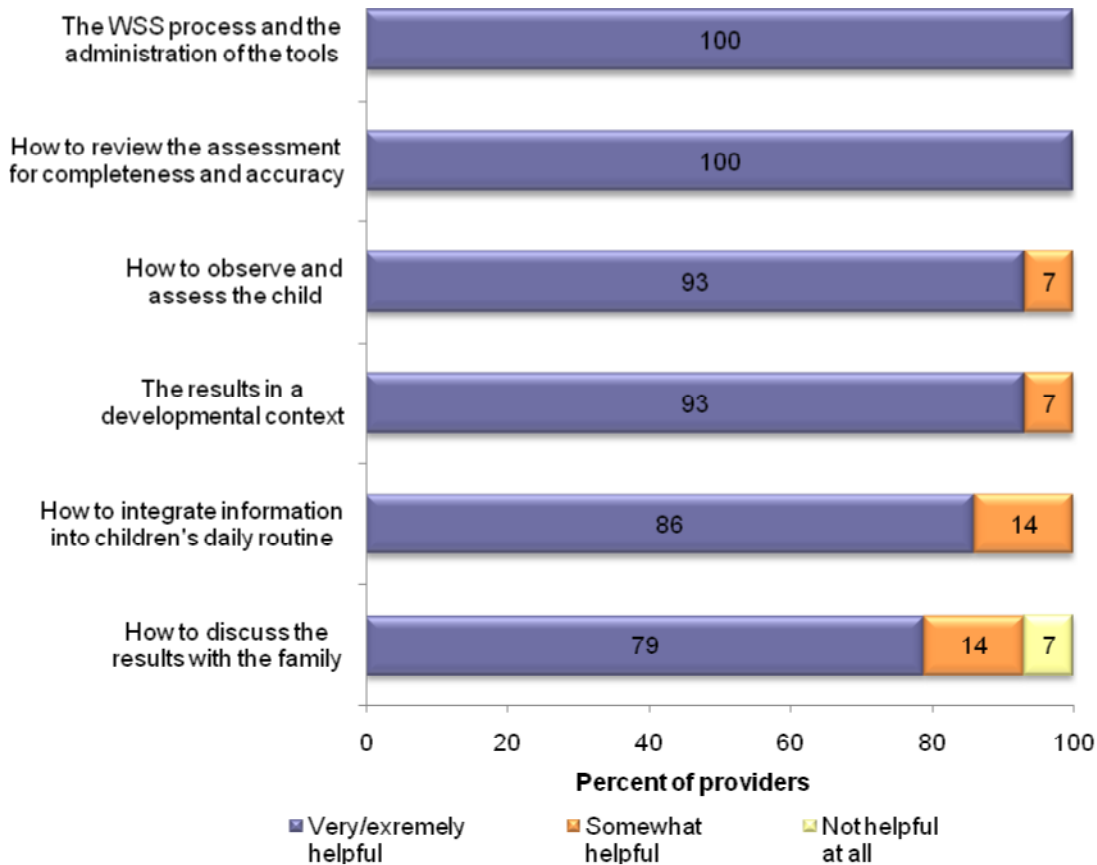
According to the program surveys and interviews, the DHS-provided training on the WSS was well received (Exhibit 19).

- Every SRC child care program reported that the WSS training and the use of WSS assessments in the programs were the most valuable component of the SRC project.
- All child care programs reported that the WSS training was either extremely or very helpful in helping to understand the process and administration of the tools.
- Over half of the child care programs (57%) received follow-up consultation from one of the trainers who provided the original WSS trainings.
 - Of the eight child care programs that did receive a follow-up consultation, almost all (88%) thought it was either extremely or very helpful, and 12% thought it was somewhat helpful.
 - The child care programs that did not receive this follow-up consultation reported that they were disappointed because they had learned so much from the initial 2-day training and they had looked forward to the follow-up consultation.

DHS provided additional WSS training later in the project.

- Most of the child care programs (86%) thought it was important for DHS to offer the semiannual booster training or follow-up support in using the WSS.

Exhibit 19. Child Care Providers' Perceptions of the Helpfulness of the WSS Training (N = 14)



Source: Program surveys.

Child care center program directors and family child care providers also were asked about their impressions of the impact of using the WSS. In the program interviews, all child care program representatives noted that the WSS assessments helped their teachers in a variety of ways, including the following:

- Observing the children more effectively
- Evaluating children's progress on developmental milestones
- Communicating this information to the parents
- Creating custom goals for the child
- Integrating the WSS results into the classroom and playground daily activities
- Offering parents opportunities to help foster their children's development at home.

More specifically, child care programs reported, in the program surveys and interviews, the following benefits from using the WSS assessment tools:

- All the child care programs (100%) reported that their teachers had new and improved skills because of their training in and use of the WSS assessments.

- Almost all child care programs (93%) reported that they used the results of the WSS to design goals and lesson plans for the children in the SRC project; all the programs (100%) used their other assessment tools as well (e.g., Ages and Stages Questionnaire, High/Scope) for developing goals and activities for the children.³⁷
- Almost two-thirds of child care programs (64%) had expanded the use of the WSS for the non-SRC children attending their programs, this number almost doubled, from 36%, since the first-time programs answered this question in August–September 2008.
- All child care programs mentioned that use of the WSS made it much easier for center staff and providers to observe the children because the WSS gave them clear directions about what they needed to observe.
- By using the WSS, child care providers also became better at communicating with parents about their children’s learning and development. This, in turn, helped involve the parents more in child care program-sponsored activities, which programs reported also helped motivate the parents to participate more in their children’s learning and education.
 - Almost all the child care programs (93%) shared the WSS results with the families; this almost doubled since the last web survey. Although the other programs (7%) had not shared this information, they used conference forms that covered similar areas but were more specific.
 - About four-fifths of the child care programs (79%) shared the results of their other assessments (e.g., ASQ, High/Scope) with the parents.
- Some of the child care programs mentioned that they noticed that the children were making gains in the developmental domains that were included in the WSS assessment. For instance, half of the child care programs (50%) mentioned that children were performing self-help tasks such as feeding and clothing themselves more independently.

In the program surveys, child care programs were asked to report about their child assessment and progress monitoring practices *prior to* the beginning of the SRC project.

- Prior to the beginning of the SRC project, most of the child care programs (86%) were already conducting assessments or screening for children 3 to 5 years old using an assessment tool, and all the staff members had received training in these assessments.
- For children 3 to 5 years old, child care programs were using a variety of child assessment tools. Two of the child care programs were already conducting assessments with a similar version of the WSS tools used in the SRC project.
- For children 0 to 2 years old, a majority of the child care programs (71%) were using a variety of child assessment tools prior to the beginning of the SRC project.
- Child care programs using both the WSS and an additional assessment tool reported that it was difficult to find time to conduct both assessments.

³⁷ Although 100% of the programs conducted additional screenings and assessments for their students, one program conducted these additional screenings and assessments only for children ages 0–2, and one other program conducted them only for children ages 3–5.

School Readiness Skills of Participating Children

SRC child care programs were required to complete a WSS checklist³⁸ on all children who were expected to enter kindergarten within 2 years of enrollment in the SRC project³⁹ between one and five times from March 2008 and June 2009, based on the child's age and how long the child was enrolled in the SRC project. The five 30-day periods for completion of WSS assessments were March–April 2008, July–August 2008, October–November 2008, January–February 2009, and April–May 2009. Two slightly different versions of the WSS checklist were being used in the SRC project, one for children who would enter kindergarten in 2 years (referred to as P3) and one for children who would enter kindergarten within 1 year (referred to as P4). Assessments were not completed for children under the age of 3.

Of the 228 children participating in the SRC project (with reported attendance data) by May 2009 who were between 3 and 5 years old while attending the SRC project, WSS data were available for 153⁴⁰ (67%). The number of children with WSS data by the end of the SRC project had increased by 30% from September 2008 when the WSS data were collected earlier. Children had varying numbers of assessments:

- 41 children with one assessment
- 49 children with two assessments
- 35 children with three assessments
- 27 children with four assessments
- 1 child with five assessments.

For 211 children (58%), there were no completed WSS data.

- Most of these children (83%) were too young at the time of the assessments.
- The remaining 35 children did not have assessments for one of the following reasons:
 - The children ended the child care program before the assessment period.
 - The children were in the program for too short a time prior to the assessment period.

Presented here are WSS data compiled in the most recent period to the end of the SRC project (June 30, 2009). Given that the number of children with WSS data at this time is small, these data should be interpreted cautiously.

Description of WSS-P3 and WSS-P4 versions

The WSS-P3 and WSS-P4 versions used in the SRC project contain slightly different numbers and wording of items. On both versions, the child's skill level for each item is rated by the provider as being *not yet attained*, *in process*, or *proficient*. The WSS-P3 version used in the

³⁸ The full WSS contains criteria in seven domains. CCAP SRC child care providers were not required to complete or submit assessments in the domains of scientific thinking, social studies, or the arts.

³⁹ Children were required to be assessed 1 or 2 years prior to kindergarten entry. The time of assessment often, but not always, corresponded to ages 3 and 4.

⁴⁰ Given the small sample sizes for the children in the SRC project, these data cannot be meaningfully interpreted.

SRC project contained a total of 37 items in four domains, and the WSS-P4 version contained a total of 40 items in four domains.⁴¹

Results from WSS assessment data for 4-year-olds

Although there are several different ways to examine the WSS data, the SRI evaluation team chose to focus on one dataset that included only those children who received the P4 assessment in either the final assessment period or the second-to-last period if they had not been assessed in the last period. See Appendix C for WSS data on all the children who received assessments and for the children who received a P3 assessment in one of the last two assessment periods.

Exhibit 20 shows the percentage of children rated at each level of skill for each item and an overall level of skill for each of the four domains.⁴² Variations in skill levels for individual items should be interpreted with care because the sample sizes for the analysis are quite small and not representative of the entire population of children participating in the SRC project.

A total of 50 children received the P4 version of the WSS in the last or second-to-last assessment periods (Exhibit 20). Overall, the percentage of children rated proficient varied by domain.

- Almost all of the 4-year-old children (92%) were rated as proficient in the physical development and health domains.
- About four-fifths of the 4-year-old children were rated as proficient in the personal and social development domain (82%), and in the language and literacy domain (78%).
- About three-fourths of the 4-year-old children (72%) were rated as proficient in the mathematical thinking domain.

⁴¹ The P4 version has two additional items in the language and literacy domain and one additional item in the mathematical thinking domain. The remaining 37 items are identical to those on the P3 version or are worded slightly differently to reflect increased skill expectations for 4-year-olds compared with 3-year-olds.

⁴² The percentage of children in each of the three skill levels for each domain was calculated by averaging the individual items within the domain.

**Exhibit 20. Developmental Proficiency Levels of 4-Year-Old Children
from Work Sampling System® Data (P4 Version)**

Domains and items	Proficiency levels (N = 50)					
	Not yet attained		In process		Proficient	
	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>
Physical development and health						
Physical development average score summary	<1%	<1	8%	4	92%	46
Performs some self-care tasks independently	2%	1	6%	3	92%	46
Moves with some balance and control	-	-	6%	3	94%	47
Uses strength and control to perform simple tasks	2%	1	4%	2	94%	47
Coordinates movements to perform simple tasks	-	-	8%	4	92%	46
Uses eye-hand coordination to perform tasks	2%	1	10%	5	88%	44
Shows beginning control of writing, drawing and art tools	2%	1	8%	4	90%	45
Follows basic health and safety rules	2%	1	8%	4	90%	45
Personal and social development						
Personal and social development domain average score summary	2%	1	16%	8	82%	41
Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner	4%	2	12%	6	84%	42
Manages transitions	-	-	18%	9	82%	40
Interacts easily with familiar adults	2%	1	6%	3	92%	46
Participates in the group life of the class	2%	1	8%	4	90%	45
Shows some self-direction	2%	1	18%	9	80%	40
Follows simple classroom rules and routines	2%	1	24%	12	74%	37
Attends to tasks and seeks help when encountering a problem	4%	2	12%	6	84%	42
Shows empathy and caring others	2%	1	20%	10	78%	38
Uses classroom materials carefully	2%	1	18%	9	80%	40
Interacts easily with one or more children	2%	1	14%	7	84%	42
Demonstrates self-confidence			18%	9	82%	41
Approaches tasks with flexibility and inventiveness	2%	1	26%	13	72%	36
Seeks adult help when needed to resolve conflicts	4%	2	18%	9	78%	39

Domains and items	Proficiency levels (N = 50)					
	Not yet attained		In process		Proficient	
	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>
Language and literacy						
Language & literacy domain average score summary	4%	2	18%	9	78%	39
Speaks clearly enough to be understood without contextual clues	-	-	16%	8	84%	42
Gains meaning by listening	2%	1	20%	10	78%	39
Shows beginning understanding of concepts about print	4%	2	20%	10	76%	38
Comprehends and responds to stories read aloud	4%	2	16%	8	80%	40
Follows two- or three-step directions	2%	1	16%	8	82%	41
Shows appreciation for books and reading	2%	1	14%	7	84%	42
Demonstrates phonological awareness	6%	3	26%	13	68%	34
Shows interest in letters and words	10%	5	16%	8	74%	37
Represents ideas and stories through pictures, dictation, and play	8%	4	20%	10	72%	36
Uses expanded vocabulary and language for a variety of purposes	-	-	20%	10	80%	39
Understands purposes for writing	8%	4	16%	8	76%	38
Uses letter-like shapes, symbols, and letters to convey meaning	6%	3	18%	9	76%	38
Mathematical thinking						
Mathematical thinking domain average score summary	6%	3	21%	11	73%	36
Shows understanding of and uses several positional words	2%	1	24%	12	74%	37
Shows beginning understanding of number and quantity	10%	5	16%	8	74%	37
Begins to order, compare, and describe objects according to a single attribute	6%	3	17%	8	77%	36
Begins to recognize and describe the attributes of shapes	6%	3	20%	10	74%	37
Sorts objects into subgroups that vary by one or two attributes	2%	1	20%	10	78%	39
Begins to recognize simple patterns and duplicates them	2%	1	22%	11	76%	38
Begins to use simple strategies to solve mathematical problems	6%	3	30%	15	64%	32
Participates in measuring activities	11%	5	21%	10	68%	32

Source: SRC program reports.

Administration and Implementation of the SRC Project

In planning the design of the SRC project, including the application and RFP process, DHS staff were able to build on current early childhood research, other projects and evaluations in Minnesota, and the existing DHS infrastructure.

- DHS staff reviewed relevant early childhood care and education research.
- DHS staff reviewed several existing or ongoing evaluations and reports. Some of these were documents created for the development of the Parent Aware quality rating system,⁴³ the ongoing evaluation of training child care providers in use of the Ounce tool,⁴⁴ a DHS study of the school readiness in accredited child care centers (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2005), and a Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) article⁴⁵ proposing changes to the current child care subsidy model. DHS staff identified components in each of these evaluations or reports that they were able to adapt and customize for the SRC project. For example, DHS worked with people who were developing the Parent Aware rating system to align the SRC provider application with the new rating system and to develop criteria to evaluate portions of the SRC project applications.
- For the SRC project, DHS staff also planned to leverage the existing CCAP authorization and payment processes that all the participating child care programs and counties already use regularly. In the program survey, the participating child care programs reported that most of these adaptations worked well.
 - Child care programs were already familiar with most of the forms the SRC project uses because they provide CCAP services.
 - Because the SRC project involved having an increased weekly rate over the existing CCAP weekly rate, DHS staff modeled the payment process after a process already in place for Special Needs rates (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2008).
 - However, some differences in the process of authorization and payment for the SRC project presented challenges for the child care programs.
 - In some counties, child care programs had to use a different provider identification number when submitting requests for payment using the higher SRC reimbursement rate. When child care programs forgot to use this SRC number, they needed to resubmit with the correct identification number.
 - Another challenge for some child care programs was that the Hennepin County automated phone line, the “Provider Line,” that they routinely used to check the eligibility of their CCAP children could not be used to check the eligibility of SRC children. To confirm SRC eligibility, these child care programs had to contact DHS directly.

⁴³ The Parent Aware rating system can be found at www.parentawareratings.org.

⁴⁴ Information about the Ounce tool can be found at www.cehd.umn.edu/ceed/projects/ounce/default.html.

⁴⁵ The CURA article is available at www.cura.umn.edu/reporter/05-Fall/Rose_et_al.pdf.

Support and facilitation by DHS and counties in project start-up activities and application/RFP process

DHS and county staff assisted child care programs in implementing and administering the SRC project. According to the DHS staff interviews, 2 months after passage of the SRC project legislation, DHS began providing child care programs with SRC project information.

- In July 2007, DHS posted the application and RFP process in the state register and on the DHS website.
- In July 2007, DHS sent a letter about the SRC project to all (10,700) licensed child care programs statewide that serve CCAP children.
- In August 2007, DHS responded to inquiries and hosted a conference to discuss the SRC project.
- In September 2007, DHS sent DVD recordings of the conference to child care programs that requested them and sent a question and answer document to all child care programs who submitted an Intent to Apply form.

According to the DHS staff interviews, DHS received considerable interest in the SRC project from child care programs across the state of Minnesota, and the processing of applications by DHS staff went smoothly.

- DHS received 105 Intent to Apply forms from child care programs, and those child care programs were given instructions on how to access the application and RFP.
- A total of 41 child care programs applied to participate in the SRC project.
- On the basis of estimated costs of care per child relative to the available funds, 14 child care programs were approved and had an agreement with DHS for SRC project funding.
- To review applications, DHS had three application review teams comprising persons with background and expertise in child development, curricula, child care resource and referral, and the county and state CCAP process. In reviewing the applications, DHS did the following:
 - Verified that child care programs had 25% or more children enrolled who were receiving CCAP.
 - Scored the overall application based on an application score sheet that evaluated the SRC criteria (e.g., caregiver/staff qualifications, educational environment, and family and community connections) and assigned a rating for the overall alignment with the criteria.
- According to the provider survey, most of the programs (71%) felt that the application process was either not difficult or that, although it was seen as difficult, was reasonable for the project that DHS was conducting.
 - About two-fifths of these child care programs (43%) suggested that if DHS enrolls additional child care programs into the SRC project in the future, it should simplify the application by either reducing the length of the application or eliminating duplicate questions within it.

Characteristics of the selected providers

The following sections summarizing accreditation/licensing, primary languages and ethnicities of staff, staff education and professional development, and the programs' use of curricula are based on information from the provider surveys.

Child care accreditation and licensing

- All 14 participating child care programs were licensed by the Minnesota DHS to provide child care services, and they varied in accreditation status.
 - About one-third of the programs (21%) were accredited (1 with NAEYC and 2 with Head Start Program of Excellence credentials).
 - About half of the programs (57%) were not currently accredited but planned to pursue accreditation in the future.
 - The remaining 21% of programs were not accredited and did not plan to pursue accreditation in the future.
- All five of the family child care providers held credentials (CDAs and 2- or 4-year degrees) that qualified them for the CCAP maximum rate differential.

Primary languages and ethnicities of staff

- The majority of staff across the 14 programs primarily spoke English (92%).
- A few staff spoke primarily Spanish (2%), with the remaining 6% of staff speaking Somali, French, Chinese, Japanese, and other languages.
- The majority of staff across the 14 programs were White (80%).
- The other staff were Black/African American (6%), Alaskan Native/American Indian (6%), Hispanic (3%), Asian (3%), and other African (2%).

Staff education and professional development

The 14 child care programs participating in the SRC project had staff members with a variety of levels of experience and education and professional development experiences.⁴⁶

- Most of the program directors had considerable experience running child care programs.
 - The directors of the nine child care center programs had an average of 14 years and 6 months of experience, with a range from 2 years and 7 months to 20 years and 9 months.
 - The directors in the family child care programs had an average of 20 years and 6 months of experience, with a range from 12 years to 30 years.
- For the 9 child care center programs, one-third of teachers and assistant teachers had at least a bachelor's degree (38% of a total of 60 teachers and 42 assistant teachers combined).
- For the 9 child care center programs, the remaining teachers and assistant teachers had differing highest levels of education.
 - 24% of teachers or assistant teachers had an AA degree.
 - 11% of teacher or assistant teachers had a CDA degree.

⁴⁶ For comparisons between the SRC project and Parent Aware program characteristics, see Appendix B.

- 22% of teachers or assistant teachers had 1 year of college credits.
- 6% of assistant teachers had a high school diploma or a GED.
- Professional development opportunities were common in the participating programs.
 - All 14 child care programs provided professional development opportunities for their teachers, including training opportunities after school or on weekends.
 - Nearly all the child care programs (86%) offered training for teachers after the school day's end or on weekends and supported teachers' attendance at regional, state, or national early childhood conferences.
 - Most of the child care programs (71%) provided formal recognition for teachers' excellence and also provided teachers with preparation and planning time for their classes.
 - Many child care programs (64%) offered training for teachers during the school day, and some (43%) of the programs participated in mentorship programs.
 - All child care center programs provided formal meetings for their teachers to discuss their work and progress with each other.
 - All child care programs required staff to complete staff development each year, and on average staff completed 41 hours of staff development each year.

Programs' use of curricula

The SRC project required programs to use a curriculum. According to the Parent Aware website,

A curriculum is a set of materials that describes a particular approach to providing learning experiences for children. It includes goals for children's learning and development, and experiences and features of environment and materials that will facilitate children's progress toward these goals. The approach may be based on research, theory or a particular philosophy of child development or education.⁴⁷

The quality of the curricula⁴⁷ used was one of the criteria on which provider applications were evaluated and child care programs were selected for their participation in the SRC project.

- Overall, most of the 14 child care programs (79%) used a commercially available or published curriculum with all children in their programs (e.g. Creative Curriculum, High/Scope Curriculum).
- A few of the programs (21%) used a specific instructional approach with the children (i.e. Program for Infant/Toddler Care [PITC], SEEDS of Early Literacy, and Educating Young Children).

Provider agreement process

After the SRC applicants had been selected by DHS between November 2007 and January 2008, DHS staff sent a provider agreement to each child care program and led a teleconference with each program to review it. This provider agreement described all the administrative and reporting requirements for the SRC project, including those required for the evaluation of the SRC project.

⁴⁷ The definition of curriculum used by Parent Aware can be found at www.parentawareratings.org/providers-educators/download/Guide_curriculum_approval_process_final.pdf.

Overall, the program interviews indicated that the child care programs were positive in their appraisals of this process.⁴⁸

- All the child care programs appreciated receiving the provider agreement and reviewing it over the phone with DHS staff.
- About one-fifth (21%) of the child care programs reported that the review of the provider agreement was lengthy, but all the programs thought the length of the process was appropriate for the purposes of this project.
- None of the child care programs requested amendments or additions to the provider agreement sent by DHS.
- None of the child care programs had suggestions for improving the provider agreement process.
- According to the program and administrative staff interviews, some of the SRC child care programs (29%) and participating counties (61%) reported that the counties should be more informed about the SRC project and ongoing processes so they can better support the programs. Another comment was that there could have been more information shared with county DHS staff members at the beginning of the project to better involve them in the process and to provide detailed information right from the start of the project.
 - Even though counties mentioned that the authorization and payment process is not complicated and is similar to the CCAP process and most counties (83%) said the guidance and information DHS provided was adequate to support the SRC project, a few of the counties would have liked more information about the SRC project.
 - Some of the suggestions counties offered included having a one-page SRC information sheet with all the SRC rules and instructions, as well as general information about the project and the its impacts.⁴⁹

SRC authorization and payment process

According to the DHS staff and program interviews, DHS set up a process for the SRC project that child care programs used to enroll children in the project and to set up the payment process for each child. The process involved several steps.

- When a child care program director or provider had an available SRC slot and a child believed to be eligible for the SRC project, she contacted staff at DHS⁵⁰ to provide information about the child and family.
- State DHS staff then contacted the staff in the county where the child lived to request verification of the child's eligibility for the SRC project, unless information could be obtained from the MEC² system.

⁴⁸ All the child care programs (100%) thought the provider agreement renewal process (in November 2008) was simple and quick.

⁴⁹ A one-page SRC description and an Implementation Memo were sent to participating counties at the beginning of the project, when new counties were added, and when the project was renewed in 2009. The Interim Report was sent to all counties in December 2008. It is likely that many county CCAP workers did not receive all communications, which were sent to only administrative contacts.

⁵⁰ Almost all child care program directors and providers mentioned their DHS staff members by name specifically when discussing their contact with DHS. All directors and providers were pleased with their communication with DHS.

- Once a child’s eligibility was verified, DHS staff contacted the child care program director or provider and notified her that she could enroll the family and begin billing for that child using the SRC reimbursement rate.
- According to the child care program directors and providers, this authorization process took anywhere from 2 days to a few weeks to complete.

According to the program surveys, child care program directors and providers generally reported positive appraisals about the speed of the approval and payment process.

- Most of the child care center program directors (78%) thought the process for obtaining approval for a family was somewhat fast; others (22%) thought the process was very slow.⁵¹
- All the family child care providers (100%) thought the process for obtaining approval for a family was very or somewhat fast.⁵²
- Most of the child care center directors (78%) and providers (80%) thought the speed of submitting requests for payments and for receiving payments was somewhat or very fast; the other directors (22%) and providers (20%) thought the process was very slow, identical to what was reported in September 2008. This also a common concern from non-SRC CCAP providers because the SRC project uses the same payment system as CCAP.

According to the SRC staff interviews, in 2008–09 the Minnesota DHS deployed a new computer system, MEC², for the counties to use for processing authorizations and payments for CCAP children. For the purpose of the SRC project, this system eliminated the need for someone from DHS to contact the county staff to check for eligibility in most cases because the information can be easily accessed by DHS from the MEC² system. At the time of the second round of surveys and interviews, the new computer system was being rolled out to one last county. Although this system simplified DHS’s needs to verify hours and dates of CCAP eligibility for children, it did not include the other tracking mechanisms used by the DHS SRC staff such as attendance and referral tracking.

Implementation policies unique to the SRC project

In addition to the reporting requirements for all child care programs serving children receiving CCAP funding, as described earlier DHS implemented some administrative and reporting requirements for the SRC project, shown in Exhibit 21 (the complete list of requirements included in the RFP is in Appendix A).

⁵¹ During the first web-based director survey in September 2008, the child care center directors reported the opposite; a couple of them (22%) thought the process was somewhat or very fast, whereas most of them (78%) thought the process was somewhat or very slow.

⁵² During the first web-based provider survey in September 2008, most of the child care providers (80%) thought the process was very fast, and one provider (20%) thought the process was very slow.

Exhibit 21. SRC Project Administrative and Reporting Requirements

CCAP SRC Administrative Requirements

Providers must notify the state when a child participating in the SRC program is no longer eligible or being served by their program or is attending the child care program less than 25 hours per week.

Providers must notify the state of changes in rates charged.

Child Care Services Provided

Providers must continue to provide full-time, full-year services.

Providers must demonstrate characteristics associated with the development of the skills and abilities that children need to succeed in school.

Reporting Changes in Care Provided

Providers must notify the state in writing:

- If their caregiver to child ratios increase
- Of changes in program staffing that result in a lower degree held by persons in the same position for the positions reported in the application
- Of changes to the curriculum or instructional approach used in the child care program.

Family and Community Connections

Providers must refer:

- All children participating in SRC to a developmental screening as soon as possible after their third birthday and before kindergarten entry
- Families of children participating in SRC to community resources.

Providers must communicate with families of children participating in SRC regarding the child's daily activities, developmental progress, and skills and must suggest activities that families can engage in at home to support the child in developing the skills and abilities needed to succeed in school.

Child Assessment

Providers must attend a training session about the Work Sampling Checklist. Providers must conduct the Work Sampling Checklist for children ages 3–5 participating in the SRC project. Providers must submit the results of the assessments of child progress to the state.

Providers must offer parents information related to the assessments completed for their child.

Cooperation with Program Evaluation

CCAP SRC providers must participate in an administrative and effectiveness evaluation of the CCAP SRC project as directed by the state.

Source: DHS staff interviews.

SRC project communication with families

All SRC families were provided with materials about the benefits of the project and their responsibilities to continue in the project. According to the program surveys and interviews,

- SRC child care center staff and providers explained the SRC project to parents and informed them of the potential benefits of participating in SRC. Parents were given a written description of the project and asked to sign acknowledgement forms when their child was enrolled in SRC. The project description included the 25 hour per week attendance requirement, the child assessment and reporting requirements, and information about why the child care program was chosen for the SRC project.
- Child Care Resource and Referral agencies were informed about the selected SRC child care programs and included these programs in their referral information when a parent was looking for care in the areas where the SRC programs were located.

SRC providers' perceptions of SRC project requirements

The DHS staff made sure to include detailed information about the requirements in the RFP and to be clear in answers to questions about requirements. Although DHS staff members reported that they were concerned about the burden of imposing additional requirements on child care programs and counties overall, programs were able to meet the requirements with little difficulty. According to the program surveys and interviews,

- Most child care center directors and family child care providers (93%) did not consider the administrative and ongoing tasks for conducting this project to be overly burdensome.⁵³ However, if the SRC project were to continue, the child care center directors and family child care providers suggested that the amount of paperwork required be reduced.
- A few of the child care center directors and family child care providers (29%) mentioned that there was extra work in submitting attendance forms and children's information to check eligibility, but overall the child care center directors and family child care providers saw most of the tasks as no more burdensome than what they have to do for the children in the CCAP program.
- SRC child care programs were required to notify DHS when certain events occurred (e.g., family loses eligibility), and all programs that notified DHS about these events were satisfied with the response and explanation DHS staff provided.
 - Most child care programs reported certain events for some of the SRC children (i.e., 10 programs [72%] reported when an SRC child stopped participating; 12 programs [86%] reported when a child entered kindergarten). Other events were reported by child care programs less frequently (i.e. children attending less than 25 hours per week, changes in staffing).
 - As of June 30, 2009, none of the child care center directors or family child care providers reported any of the following events to DHS:

⁵³ One county with a large number of participating children thought the administrative tasks were time consuming, especially because only a small percentage (about 4%) of the CCAP children were receiving the SRC funds.

- Negative licensing actions/maltreatment determinations
- Change in licensing status
- Change in caregiver to child ratios.

Communication between DHS, county, and child care program staff

On the basis of program surveys and interviews with DHS, administrative staff, and programs, child care programs participating in the SRC project were satisfied and appreciative of their communication and relationship with DHS staff. Child care center program directors and family child care providers reported that they received prompt responses to requests and questions and they were satisfied with the responses from DHS. However, there were suggestions for improving local child care program and county communication in some counties.

- One of the existing CCAP infrastructure components that the SRC project included was the relationship between the child care providers and the counties and existing local eligibility⁵⁴ and payment processes. Child care provider and county staff stated that they wanted better communication about the SRC project as well as about CCAP processes more generally.
 - For some child care providers, the response from county staff in the existing CCAP eligibility and payment process was described as slow, and this was also the case for the SRC eligibility and payment process.
 - Overall, the county staff wanted to be more informed about the SRC project in general and wanted to know more about what the project was doing.

⁵⁴ In the CCAP eligibility process, the child care providers sometimes worked with families to submit the necessary paperwork directly to the counties. In the SRC eligibility process, the child care providers sent identifying information about the child and parent to DHS, and DHS sent that information to the county for eligibility determination.

Summary and Recommendations

The results of the evaluation indicate that the SRC project was successful in meeting its goals. Overall, the project was well managed by DHS staff, and the child care programs and families that participated were pleased with the benefits, implementation, and administration of the project. DHS staff members were able to build on existing and past initiatives and projects and take components of the evaluations and then customize them for use in the SRC application/RFP and provider agreement processes. DHS also used the existing CCAP eligibility and payment processes all counties and child care programs were already familiar with. Key to the project's success was the dedicated child care program staffs, providers, and county and DHS staffs who worked collaboratively and communicated well to meet the goal of enhancing the quality of the services and supports provided to children and families.

The additional funds provided by the SRC project were used in 14 child care programs (9 child care center and 5 family child care programs) with 364 participating children and families. The child care programs used the funds for a variety of quality improvement activities and services for children, families, and programs to help pay for such costs as the following:

- Conducting the WSS assessments
- Making referrals for developmental screening and other services and assessments
- Enhancing their parent engagement efforts
- Helping to improve the overall quality of the services and supports offered (e.g., through provision of professional development opportunities for staff, use of WSS data to inform instruction and the learning environment, purchase of curricula and materials)
- Administrative time for conducting the project and complying with the SRC requirements and reporting

The ultimate goal of the SRC project was to directly help the children and families who were part of the project. Although there are many ways children and families benefited directly and indirectly from the SRC project, both parents and child care program directors and providers reported high satisfaction and enthusiasm for the SRC project, noting the following as the most common benefits:

- Children were able to continue attending the SRC project even if the parents' schedule of authorized activity changed as long as the child continued to attend the SRC project at least 25 hours per week.
- Through the WSS assessment process, teachers were more effectively observing children and provided families with more information in an easy-to-understand way so that parents were more informed and were encouraged to become more involved in their children's education and school.
- Teachers and child care program staff appeared to be more observant of the needs of children and families, effectively providing referral and resource information when needed and helping to facilitate the referral process.
- Children appeared to have a greater variety of learning opportunities available to them in their child care programs, and parents were highly satisfied with the quality of the child's learning in their child care programs.

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made, should the SRC project be continued or expanded in some form beyond the pilot child care programs and communities.

- Continue to reimburse selected programs at a higher rate for care provided under SRC in order to assist child care programs in upgrading their quality, particularly with the use of curricula and child assessment and progress monitoring tools that can improve children's learning opportunities.
- Use the MEC² system for processing SRC eligibility and payment processing to make administrative tasks more efficient and consistent so that a streamlined system is easier and faster to use for both the child care programs and the families.
- Automate as many of the forms online as possible so that programs can submit documents electronically and securely through a database or e-mail, including a secure online system for child care programs to use to collect and report on WSS and referral data.
- Provide more information at the start-up phase of the project and on an ongoing basis to counties so that staff members fully understand the administrative processes and the goals of the project.
- Use experience from the 2009–11 continuation of the SRC pilot, which requires SRC programs to participate in Parent Aware to recommend whether joining Parent Aware or some other rating system would be beneficial for SRC programs.

DHS should further explore the following questions:

- If the School Readiness Connections model were to be expanded across the state, what additional information would be needed to account for the cost of child care for such an expansion? Several specific questions related to costs include:
 - a) Is the 25% rate differential appropriate? How should this interact with the 15% accreditation/credential rate differential? Does the relationship to rates in the child care market affect the level of the differential? If so, how?
 - b) When programs receive other public funds, should those funds factor into setting SRC rates?
 - c) What cost would be attributed to the weekly care component? And is the weekly authorization a component of SRC that is necessary to
 - Promote continuity of care and/or
 - Encourage high-quality providers to care for children participating in CCAP?
- Over time, how will the SRC project affect parents' selection of child care providers?
- SRC was designed to promote continuity of care through more "family friendly" policies of authorizing care (e.g., weekly authorizations as long as the family retained eligibility for the general CCAP program). How did families' periods of temporary ineligibility for the general CCAP program impact this goal?
- What can be done to further streamline the approval process now that MEC² is being used statewide? Are there other administrative procedures that could be simplified?

- SRC programs and participating families had specific requirements in addition to the CCAP. If the SRC model were to continue, these requirements should be examined more fully, including the following questions.
 - a) At the point of their original SRSA application, SRC programs were required to serve at least 25% of their children enrolled in the CCAP. Is 25% enrollment the appropriate standard for child care programs? If not, what percentage should be required?
 - b) Children are required to attend an average of 25 hours per week in the SRC program. Is the attendance requirement an appropriate amount for maintaining eligibility? If not, what would be an appropriate attendance requirement?
 - c) Is 35 the appropriate number of hours for authorized activities for parents' eligibility for the SRC project? If not, what would be an appropriate recommended number of required hours?

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Appendix A

Tasks and Deliverables in SRC Program RFP

Providers entering into a CCAP SRC provider agreement with the State must provide child care and family support services that support children's developmental progress and readiness to begin school.

CCAP SRC Administrative Requirements

CCAP SRC providers must maintain compliance with all CCAP program requirements.

CCAP SRC providers must notify the State when a child participating in the CCAP SRC program is no longer being served by their program, is no longer eligible for the CCAP SRC program due to kindergarten entrance, or is attending the child care program less than 25 hours per week.

CCAP SRC providers must receive written notice from the State that a child has been approved for participation in SRC before submitting invoices for payment at the higher CCAP SRC rate for that child. This requirement applies both at the time the provider agreement is signed and whenever additional children begin participating in SRC during the life of the provider agreement.

CCAP SRC providers must notify the State of changes in rates charged.

Child Care Services

CCAP SRC providers must not receive any negative licensing actions, or maltreatment determinations or operate under a conditional license for the duration of the provider agreement.

CCAP SRC providers must continue to provide full-time, full-year services.

CCAP SRC providers must demonstrate characteristics associated with the development of the skills and abilities that children need to succeed in school.

CCAP SRC providers must use a curriculum or instructional approach that supports children's developmental progress and readiness to begin school.

Reporting Changes in Care Provided

CCAP SRC providers must notify the State in writing:

- if their caregiver to child ratios increase (if fewer caregivers and/or more children are enrolled than reported on the application).
- of changes in program staffing that result in a lower degree held by persons in the same position, for the positions reported in the application (for child care homes: licensed child care home operator; for child care centers: center directors, education coordinators, and lead teachers).
- of changes to the curriculum or instructional approach used in the child care program.

Family and Community Connections

CCAP SRC providers must refer:

- All children participating in SRC to a developmental screening as soon as possible following their third birthday and prior to kindergarten entry. The provider will support the family in obtaining a screening appointment.

Families of children participating in SRC to community resources that the provider determines would support the family in helping their children enter school with the skills and abilities needed for school success.

CCAP SRC providers must submit to the State within 100 days of signing the provider agreement a list of local resources to which they will refer families participating in SRC.

CCAP SRC providers must communicate with families of children participating in SRC regarding the child's daily activities, developmental progress, and skills and must suggest activities that families can engage in at home to support the child in developing the skills and abilities needed to succeed in school.

Child Assessment

CCAP SRC family child providers, and, in center-based programs, at least one lead teacher per classroom serving children aged 3–5 must participate in training on how to use the adapted version of the Work Sampling Checklist (Meisels et al., 2001) within 100 days of the start date of the CCAP SRC agreement. The State will offer training in the use of this assessment tool during the required time period (see Section VIII of the RFP State's Responsibilities for more information on the training). CCAP SRC family child care providers and lead teachers may attend another authorized Work Sampling training during this 100-day period and meet the requirements of the CCAP SRC agreement. Training must be completed during the 100-day period and written documentation of this completed training must be submitted to the State no later than 120 days following the start of the provider agreement.

Individual providers and teachers who can demonstrate through written documentation that they have previously completed training in use of the Work Sampling Checklist will be exempt from this training requirement. Written documentation must be submitted within 100 days of the start date of the CCAP SRC agreement.

The State will offer one additional training session in 2008 to accommodate staff turnover and new CCAP SRC providers. If during the duration of the CCAP SRC agreement and before the date of the State offered training, staff changes result in a classroom serving children aged 3-5 where no lead teacher is trained in the use of the Work Sampling Checklist, a lead teacher from that classroom will be required to complete training from the State or another qualified trainer to use the Work Sampling Checklist. New providers and lead teachers may obtain authorized Work Sampling training from a source other than the training offered by the State; however, this training must be completed by the final date of the training offered by the State. Written documentation of this outside training must be received by the State no later than 30 days following the last date of the 2008 State offered training.

CCAP SRC providers must submit written documentation of training when staff changes result in new lead teachers with previous training in using the Work Sampling Checklist. This written

documentation must be provided to the State within 30 days following the last date of the State offered training in 2008.

Once CCAP SRC providers have completed training in the use of the Work Sampling Checklist they must complete the Work Sampling Checklist for children aged 3–5 participating in the CCAP SRC project. Providers must assess children 2–3 times per 12-month period, or provide a written statement to the State explaining why they were unable to complete the required assessments.

CCAP SRC providers must submit the results of the assessments of child progress to the State and/or a program evaluator selected by the State within 30 days of completion.

CCAP SRC providers must offer parents appropriate information related to the assessments completed for their child in a manner that aligns with the guidance provided during the Work Sampling⁵⁵ training sessions.

Cooperation with Program Evaluation

CCAP SRC providers must participate in an administrative and effectiveness evaluation of the CCAP SRC project as directed by the State. Requirements may include providing attendance records for children participating in the CCAP SRC program; completing an in-person or phone interview, and/or survey regarding CCAP SRC requirements and the administrative components of the program; facilitating parent interviews or survey completions; and other duties as determined by the State or the evaluator(s) hired by the State.

All requirements apply to the duration of the provider agreement unless otherwise specified.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Appendix B

Comparison of Program Quality Indicators from School Readiness Connections Pilot Project and Parent Aware Evaluations, 2009⁵⁶

The comparisons below include data collected in the SRC project evaluation and evaluation of Parent Aware participating programs.

Indicator/Area	SRC Programs	Parent Aware Programs
Curriculum	<p>79% used a commercially available or published curriculum with all children in their programs (e.g. Creative Curriculum, High/Scope Curriculum). Of these, 57% used Creative Curriculum with 3–5 year old children, and 64% used with children age 0–2.</p> <p>21% used a specific instructional approach with the children (i.e. Program for Infant/Toddler Care [PITC], SEEDS of Early Literacy, and Educating Young Children.)</p>	<p>87% of the child care programs used a curriculum.</p> <p>48% of the child care programs used Creative Curriculum.</p> <p>15% of the child care programs used a locally developed curriculum.</p>
Assessment	<p>86% of the child care programs were conducting child assessments or screening for children 3 to 5 years old using an assessment tool, prior to the start of SRC. 100% of SRC providers were required to use the Work Sampling System (WSS) child assessment and progress monitoring tool, with 3–5 year old children participating in SRC</p>	<p>94% of the child care programs routinely and formally tracked the development or progress of the children in their care</p>
Program Experience	<p>The directors of child care center programs had an average of 14 years of experience working in child care settings, with a range from 2 years to 20 years.</p> <p>Providers of the family child care programs had an average of 20 years of experience working in child care settings, with a range from 12 years to 30 years.</p>	<p>The directors of the 46 child care centers had an average of 16 years of experience working in child care settings.</p> <p>Providers of the 30 family care programs had an average of 14 years of experience working in child care settings.</p>

⁵⁶ Data collected from the child care program center director and family provider surveys from the Parent Aware evaluation were used to compare to some of the SRC evaluation data. These comparisons were only available for a small subset of the SRC data. The data from the Parent Aware evaluation were provided by 54 child care center programs and 32 family child care programs. Programs enrolled in Parent Aware and completed surveys from August 2008 to July 2009. The sample of child care center programs included both fully rated and accredited programs, including some Minnesota Department of Education School Readiness and Head Start programs, and a few provisionally rated programs. The response rate for completing this survey was higher for directors at accredited child care center programs than for directors at fully rated child care center programs. Most of the family child care program providers in this sample were fully rated, with only three of these programs that were accredited. Overall, most of the child care programs represented in the Parent Aware evaluation data were rated as three to four star programs, with only a few rated as one to two star programs.

Indicator/Area	SRC Programs	Parent Aware Programs
<p>Teacher Education</p>	<p>38% of teachers and assistant teachers in the child care center programs had at least a bachelor's degree (60 teachers and 42 assistant teachers combined).</p> <p>24% of teachers or assistant teachers had an AA degree.</p> <p>11% of teacher or assistant teachers had a CDA degree.</p> <p>22% of teachers or assistant teachers had 1 year of college credits.</p> <p>6% of assistant teachers had a high school diploma or a GED.</p> <p>100% of the family child care providers held credentials (CDA's and 2- or 4-year degrees) that qualified them for the CCAP maximum rate differential.</p>	<p>48% of teachers and assistant teachers in the child care center programs had at least a bachelor's degree (243 teachers and 38 assistant teachers).</p> <p>20% of teachers and assistant teachers in the child care center programs had an AA degree.</p> <p>26% of teachers and assistant teachers in the child care center programs had college credits in early childhood education, but did not have a degree.</p> <p>7% of teachers and assistant teachers in the child care center programs had a high school diploma or a GED.</p>
<p>Professional Development</p>	<p>100% of the 14 child care programs provided professional development opportunities for their teachers, including training opportunities after school or on weekends.</p> <p>86% of the child care programs offered training for teachers after the school day ends or on weekends, and supported teachers' attendance at regional, state, or national early childhood conferences.</p> <p>71% of the child care programs provided formal recognition for teachers' excellence, and also provided teachers with preparation and planning time for their classes.</p> <p>64% of the child care programs offered training for teachers during the school day.</p> <p>43% of the child care programs participated in mentorship programs.</p> <p>All child care center programs provided formal meetings for their teachers to discuss their work and progress with each other.</p> <p>All child care programs required staff to complete staff development each year, and on average, staff completed 41 hours of staff development each year.</p>	<p>79% of 53 child care center programs offered training for teachers after the school day ends or on weekends.</p> <p>72% of 53 child care center programs supported teachers' attendance at regional, state, or national early childhood conferences.</p> <p>55% of 53 child care center programs provided formal recognition for teachers' excellence.</p> <p>96% of 53 child care center programs provided teachers with preparation and planning time for their classes.</p> <p>81% of 53 child care center programs offered training for teachers during the school day.</p> <p>38% of 53 child care center programs participated in mentorship programs.</p> <p>98% of 53 child care center programs provided formal meetings for their teachers to discuss their work and progress with each other.</p> <p>On average, the staff at child care center programs completed 36 hours per year, of staff development.</p>

Indicator/Area	SRC Programs	Parent Aware Programs
Accreditation or Head Start	<p>21% were accredited (1 with NAEYC, and 2 with Head Start Program of Excellence credentials).^c</p> <p>57% were not currently accredited, but planned to pursue accreditation in the future.</p> <p>21% of programs were not accredited and did not plan to pursue accreditation in the future.</p>	<p>44% of the 80 child care programs were accredited (30 NAEYC, 3 NAFCC, and 2 NECPA), and 8% of the 80 child care center programs were either conducting the self-study or awaiting a validation visit (3 NAFCC and 3 NAEYC)</p> <p>34% of the child care programs were not accredited, but planned to pursue accreditation in the future.</p> <p>11% of the child care programs were not accredited and did not plan to pursue accreditation in the future.</p>

^a The extent to which providers met these requirements were a factor in being chosen to participate in SRC and their final rating in Parent Aware. ^b The definition of curriculum used by Parent Aware can be found at www.parentawareratings.org/providers-educators/download/Guide_curriculum_approval_process_final.pdf. ^c National Association for the Education of Young Children and National Association of Family Child Care.

Additional Quality Comparisons⁵⁷

Indicator/Area	SRC	Parent Aware
Licensure	All programs are licensed (not a requirement). Negative licensing actions may disqualify.	Requires the program be licensed unless the program is license exempt (e.g., School-based programs are exempt). Negative licensing actions result in a reduction in the rating to one star.
Duration	Programs must offer services year round at least 7 hours per day.	No duration requirements with the exception of the provisional rating, which requires that the program offer at least 12 hours/week.
Family Partnerships	Programs were evaluated on their strategies or plan to inform and support parents, especially for low income families. Early childhood screening referrals were required. Providers must maintain a list of community or internal resources to make referrals and connect family to community resources.	Provider receives points for having family partnerships, such as how they gather and use parent feedback, provide intake interviews, make Early Childhood Screening referrals, and transition plans.
On-site observation	Not required during initial pilot.	The full rating requires both an ECERS and a CLASS observation. For centers, preschool classrooms must receive a CLASS score of 3 or higher in each category (Emotional Support, Instructional Support; Classroom Organization) to achieve 4 stars.

⁵⁷ These items are components of the projects but were not included in the SRC and Parent Aware provider surveys

Appendix C

WSS Assessment Results for All Children Who Participated in the SRC Project

Children who received the P3 version

A total of 64 children received the P3 version of the WSS at least once during the SRC project (using data from the period closest to the end of the SRC project). These data should be interpreted cautiously due to the small sample size.

Overall, the percentage of children rated proficient varied by domain.

- More than two-thirds of these children (70%) were rated as proficient in the physical development and health domain.
- About half of these children were rated as proficient in the personal and social development domain (55%) and in the language and literacy domain (44%).
- About one-third of these children (37%) were rated as proficient in the mathematical thinking domain.

Exhibit C-1. Developmental Proficiency Levels of 3-Year Old Children from Work Sampling System© (P3 Version) (N = 64)

Domains and items	Proficiency levels (n = 64)					
	Not yet		In process		Proficient	
	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
Physical Development and Health						
Physical development average score summary	1%	1	29%	18	70%	44
Coordinates movements to perform simple tasks	–	0	21%	13	79%	49
Moves with some balance and control	–	0	24%	15	76%	48
Uses eye-hand coordination to perform tasks	2%	1	33%	21	66%	42
Follows basic health and safety rules	5%	3	33%	21	63%	40
Performs some self-care tasks independently	3%	2	33%	21	64%	41
Uses strength and control to perform simple tasks	–	0	22%	14	78%	50
Explores the use of various/shows beginning control of writing, drawing and art tools	5%	3	36%	23	59%	38
Personal and social development						
Personal and social development domain average score summary	5%	3	40%	25	55%	35
Interacts easily with familiar adults	3%	2	25%	16	72%	46
Interacts easily with one or more children	5%	3	29%	18	67%	42
Manages transitions	5%	3	45%	29	50%	32
Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner	5%	3	41%	26	55%	35
Uses classroom materials carefully	3%	2	41%	26	56%	36
Participates in the group life of the class	6%	4	36%	23	58%	37
Shows some self-direction	3%	2	41%	25	56%	34
Demonstrates self-confidence	2%	1	42%	27	56%	36
Follows simple classroom rules and routines	6%	4	44%	28	50%	32
Shows empathy and caring for others	10%	6	46%	29	44%	28
Approaches play with purpose and inventiveness	8%	5	34%	21	58%	36
Attends to tasks and seeks help when encountering a problem	3%	2	46%	29	51%	32
Seeks adult help when needed to resolve conflicts	6%	4	46%	29	48%	30
Language and literacy						
Language & literacy domain average score summary	9%	6	47%	30	44%	28
Follows two or three-step directions	–	0	40%	25	60%	38
Speaks clearly enough to be understood without contextual clues	11%	7	27%	17	63%	40
Uses expanded vocabulary and language for a variety of purposes	11%	7	45%	28	44%	27
Gains meaning by listening	3%	2	47%	30	50%	32

Domains and items	Proficiency levels (n = 64)					
	Not yet		In process		Proficient	
Shows interest in letters and words	13%	8	55%	35	33%	21
Comprehends and responds to stories read aloud	11%	7	52%	32	37%	23
Shows appreciation for books and reading	11%	7	45%	29	44%	28
Uses scribbles and unconventional shapes to write	14%	9	42%	27	44%	28
Demonstrated phonological awareness	6%	4	67%	43	27%	17
Represents ideas and stories through pictures, dictation, and play	13%	8	50%	32	38%	24
Mathematical thinking						
Mathematical thinking domain average score summary	15%	9	48%	30	37%	23
Shows beginning understanding of number and quantity	13%	8	54%	34	33%	21
Begins to use simple strategies to solve mathematical problems	13%	8	56%	35	32%	20
Sorts objects into subgroups that vary by one or two attributes	18%	11	46%	29	37%	23
Shows understanding of and uses several positional words	11%	7	47%	29	42%	26
Begins to recognize and describe the attributes of shapes	13%	8	41%	26	46%	29
Shows understanding of some comparative words	18%	11	42%	26	40%	25
Participates in measuring activities	26%	16	51%	31	23%	14

Note. Source: SRC program reports.

Children who received the P4 version

WSS assessment results for 4-year-olds

A total of 89 children received the P4 version of the WSS at least once during the SRC project (using data from the period closest to the end of the SRC project). These data should be interpreted cautiously due to the small sample size.

Overall, the percentage of children rated proficient varied by domain.

- Over four-fifths of the 4-year-old children (89%) were rated as proficient in the physical development and health domain.
- About three-fourths of the 4-year-old children were rated as proficient in the personal and social development domain (78%), and in the language and literacy domain (73%).
- About two-thirds of the 4-year-old children were rated as proficient in the mathematical thinking domain (68%).

**Exhibit C-2. Developmental Proficiency Levels of 4-Year Old Children from
Work Sampling System© (P4 Version) (N = 89)**

Domains and items	Proficiency levels (n = 89)					
	Not yet		In process		Proficient	
	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
Physical development and health						
Physical development average score summary	1%	1	10%	9	89%	78
Performs some self-care tasks independently	1%	1	8%	7	91%	80
Moves with some balance and control	-	-	12%	11	88%	78
Uses strength and control to perform simple tasks	1%	1	8%	7	91%	81
Coordinates movements to perform simple tasks			12%	11	88%	78
Uses eye-hand coordination to perform tasks	1%	1	13%	12	85%	76
Explores the use of various/shows beginning control of writing, drawing and art tools	3%	3	9%	8	88%	78
Follows basic health and safety rules	2%	2	10%	9	88%	78
Personal and social development						
Personal and social development domain average score summary	2%	2	20%	18	78%	69
Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner	2%	2	17%	15	81%	72
Manages transitions	-	-	20%	18	80%	70
Interacts easily with familiar adults	1%	1	12%	11	87%	77
Participates in the group life of the class	3%	3	13%	12	83%	74
Shows some self-direction	2%	2	19%	17	78%	69
Follows simple classroom rules and routines	1%	1	25%	22	74%	66
Attends to tasks and seeks help when encountering a problem	3%	3	18%	16	79%	70
Shows empathy and caring others	3%	3	20%	18	76%	67
Uses classroom materials carefully	1%	1	24%	21	75%	67
Interacts easily with one or more children	1%	1	20%	18	79%	70
Demonstrates self-confidence			24%	21	76%	67
Approaches tasks with flexibility and inventiveness	3%	3	29%	26	67%	60
Seeks adult help when needed to resolve conflicts	4%	4	25%	22	71%	63
Language and literacy						
Language & literacy domain average score summary	5%	4	22%	20	73%	65
Speaks clearly enough to be understood without contextual clues	3%	3	15%	13	82%	73
Gains meaning by listening	3%	3	20%	18	76%	68
Shows beginning understanding of concepts about print	4%	4	20%	18	75%	67
Comprehends and responds to stories read aloud	3%	3	19%	17	78%	69

Domains and items	Proficiency levels (n = 89)					
	Not yet		In process		Proficient	
	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
Follows two or three-step directions	2%	2	21%	19	76%	68
Shows appreciation for books and reading	2%	2	19%	17	79%	70
Demonstrated phonological awareness	7%	6	27%	24	66%	59
Shows interest in letters and words	6%	5	25%	22	70%	62
Represents ideas and stories through pictures, dictation, and play	6%	5	28%	25	66%	59
Uses expanded vocabulary and language for a variety of purposes	2%	2	27%	24	70%	62
Understands purposes for writing	9%	8	24%	21	67%	60
Uses letter-like shapes, symbols and letters to convey meaning	6%	5	29%	26	65%	58
Mathematical thinking						
Mathematical thinking domain average score summary	6%	5	26%	23	68%	59
Shows understanding of and uses several positional words	5%	4	23%	20	73%	64
Shows beginning understanding of number and quantity	7%	6	21%	19	72%	64
Begins to order, compare and describe objects according to a single attribute	7%	6	23%	19	70%	59
Begins to recognize and describe the attributes of shapes	6%	5	26%	23	68%	60
Sorts objects into subgroups that vary by one or two attributes	2%	2	28%	24	70%	61
Begins to recognize simple patterns and duplicates them	6%	5	26%	23	69%	61
Begins to use simple strategies to solve mathematical problems	7%	6	33%	29	61%	54
Participates in measuring activities	7%	6	32%	27	61%	51

Note. Source: SRC program reports.

Children who received the P3 version in the last two assessment periods

A total of 45 children received the P3 version of the WSS in the last assessment period, or second to last assessment period if the child did not receive an assessment in the last assessment period. These data should be interpreted cautiously due to the small sample size.

Overall, the percentage of children rated proficient varied by domain. Each of the following proficiency levels is within a few percentage points of the P3 dataset for all children.

- About three-fourths of these children (73%) were rated as proficient in the physical development and health domain.
- About half of these children were rated as proficient in the personal and social development domain (58%) and in the language and literacy domain (43%).
- About one-third of these children (35%) were rated as proficient in the mathematical thinking domain.

**Exhibit C-3. Developmental Proficiency Levels of 3-Year Old Children from
Work Sampling System© (P3 Version) (N = 45)**

Domains and items	Proficiency levels (n = 45)					
	Not yet		In process		Proficient	
	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
Physical Development and Health						
Physical development average score summary	<1%	<1	27%	12	73%	33
Coordinates movements to perform simple tasks	-	-	16%	7	84%	37
Moves with some balance and control	-	-	20%	9	80%	35
Uses eye-hand coordination to perform tasks	-	-	29%	13	71%	32
Follows basic health and safety rules	2%	1	31%	14	67%	30
Performs some self-care tasks independently	2%	1	33%	15	64%	29
Uses strength and control to perform simple tasks	-	-	18%	8	82%	37
Explores the use of various/shows beginning control of writing, drawing and art tools	4%	2	33%	15	62%	28
Personal and social development						
Personal and social development domain average score summary	4%	2	38%	17	58%	26
Interacts easily with familiar adults	2%	1	22%	10	76%	34
Interacts easily with one or more children	2%	1	24%	11	73%	33
Manages transitions	2%	1	44%	20	53%	24
Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner	4%	2	40%	18	56%	25
Uses classroom materials carefully	4%	2	36%	16	60%	27
Participates in the group life of the class	7%	3	33%	15	60%	27
Shows some self-direction	2%	1	42%	18	56%	24
Demonstrates self-confidence			42%	19	58%	26
Follows simple classroom rules and routines	7%	3	40%	18	53%	24
Shows empathy and caring for others	7%	3	49%	22	44%	20
Approaches play with purpose and inventiveness	7%	3	30%	13	64%	28
Attends to tasks and seeks help when encountering a problem	2%	1	39%	17	59%	26
Seeks adult help when needed to resolve conflicts	2%	1	47%	21	51%	23
Language and literacy						
Language & literacy domain average score summary	9%	4	48%	21	43%	19
Follows two or three-step directions	-	-	43%	19	57%	25
Speaks clearly enough to be understood without contextual clues	11%	5	29%	13	60%	27
Uses expanded vocabulary and language for a variety of purposes	14%	6	43%	19	43%	19
Gains meaning by listening	4%	2	44%	20	51%	23

Domains and items	Proficiency levels (n = 45)					
	Not yet		In process		Proficient	
Shows interest in letters and words	11%	5	58%	26	31%	14
Comprehends and responds to stories read aloud	14%	6	50%	22	36%	16
Shows appreciation for books and reading	11%	5	44%	20	44%	20
Uses scribbles and unconventional shapes to write	11%	5	44%	20	44%	20
Demonstrated phonological awareness	7%	3	64%	29	29%	13
Represents ideas and stories through pictures, dictation, and play	9%	4	58%	26	33%	15
Mathematical thinking						
Mathematical thinking domain average score summary	14%	6	51%	22	35%	15
Shows beginning understanding of number and quantity	11%	5	57%	25	32%	14
Begins to use simple strategies to solve mathematical problems	9%	4	64%	28	27%	12
Sorts objects into subgroups that vary by one or two attributes	18%	8	50%	22	32%	14
Shows understanding of and uses several positional words	11%	5	48%	21	41%	18
Begins to recognize and describe the attributes of shapes	7%	3	45%	20	48%	21
Shows understanding of some comparative words	19%	8	42%	18	40%	17
Participates in measuring activities	23%	10	53%	23	23%	10

Note. Source: SRC program reports.

Comparison of Work Sampling System© data from the SRC project and from the Minnesota School Readiness Study⁵⁸

At the request of DHS, this section shows a comparison of the preliminary WSS data from the SRC project with WSS data available for a sample of kindergarten children in Minnesota (Exhibit 27). These statewide kindergarten WSS data were collected in the 2008 Minnesota School Readiness Study.⁵⁹ That statewide sample included 6,310 kindergarteners from 96 randomly selected elementary schools across the state of Minnesota.

The comparison shows that the children participating in the SRC project had higher proficiencies in all domains compared with the kindergarten sample. However, given the small sample sizes for the children in the SRC project, these data must be interpreted cautiously.

Exhibit C-4. Developmental Proficiency Levels from Work Sampling System© Checklist for Children in SRC Project and in the Minnesota School Readiness Study

Work Sampling System© domains	SRC project 4-year-olds ^a	Minnesota School Readiness Study 5-year-olds
	(N = 44)	(N = 6,310)
Physical development and health	92%	61%
Personal and social development	82%	49%
Language and literacy	78%	47%
Mathematical thinking	73%	44%

^a This includes only the children who received a P4 assessment in one of the last two assessment periods.

Source: SRC program reports and Minnesota School Readiness Study 2008.

⁵⁸ Minnesota Department of Education (2008). *Minnesota school readiness study: Developmental assessment at kindergarten entrance*. Available at:

<http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/EarlyLearning/documents/Report/013941.pdf>

⁵⁹ Ibid.