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Study Supports Focus on High-Quality Early Childhood Education

--Kindergarten preparation gap persists for some children--

Roseville, MN – Newly released results of the 2010 Minnesota School Readiness Study show children from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to be school ready upon entering kindergarten. According to the report, 59 percent of children arrive at kindergarten proficient in language and literacy, 52 percent are proficient in mathematical thinking and 56 percent show readiness in social and emotional development.

“We know that one of the biggest predictors of academic success in children – especially economically disadvantaged young children and children of color – is their level of readiness when they enter kindergarten,” said Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius. “That’s why Governor Dayton has put such a strong emphasis on investing in our youngest learners in his 7-Point Plan, and why it is imperative to continue to focus on our goals to make high-quality early education experiences available to every Minnesota child.”

According to analysis by the Human Capital Research Collaborative (HCRC), a partnership between the University of Minnesota and the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis led by Dr. Arthur J. Reynolds and Dr. Art Rolnick, children are considered proficient in the skills necessary to enter kindergarten if they achieve 75 percent or more of the total points on the 32 school-readiness indicators.

In the 2010 Study, 40 percent of Minnesota kindergartners did not reach the 75 percent achievement level for overall school readiness, with the largest readiness deficits showing up in students of color. Comparatively, 63 percent of White students reached the 75 percent achievement level, while only 57 percent of Black students, 44 percent of American Indian students and 44 percent of Hispanic students earned the 75 percent achievement level.

Results of the School Readiness Study are considered predictive of student proficiency by third grade, especially in reading and math, bolstering research that says investments in early learning pay dividends over time. HCRC findings show that kindergartners not yet proficient in all developmental areas in the study were more than twice as likely to have been in special education or retained by third grade, even when holding constant gender, race/ethnicity, parent education, family income or special education status.

Child development areas assessed in the study are: personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, physical development and the arts. This year’s study involved 5,654 kindergartners from 108 representative elementary schools across the state, which reflects 9 percent of students entering kindergarten in the fall of 2010.

Early learning initiatives have played a key role in Governor Dayton’s administration. In addition to using executive authority to provide funding to expand a quality rating system for childcare providers, a broadly supported Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant application was submitted in October. The Governor also appointed members to the statewide Early Learning Council, and created a new Children’s Cabinet to align state agency work around early learning and other issues. Additionally, Commissioner Cassellius has created a new Office of Early

Learning at the Minnesota Department of Education to bring strategic focus to early learning across the state.

Read the School Readiness Summary – Fall 2010

http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=022408&RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary

Read the complete School Readiness Study - Fall 2010

http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=022429&RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary

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