

EVALUATION REPORT: ARRA – INCENTIVES TO COMMUNITIES TO SUPPORT LAYERING OF EARLY CHILDHOOD FUNDING IN ORDER TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN IN PROGRAMS

June 2012

This evaluation report provides an overview of the activities carried out in each district through the awarding of this grant as well as opportunities, challenges and successes districts experienced while layering funding. The report also provides information about the lessons learned and best practices for layering early childhood funding.

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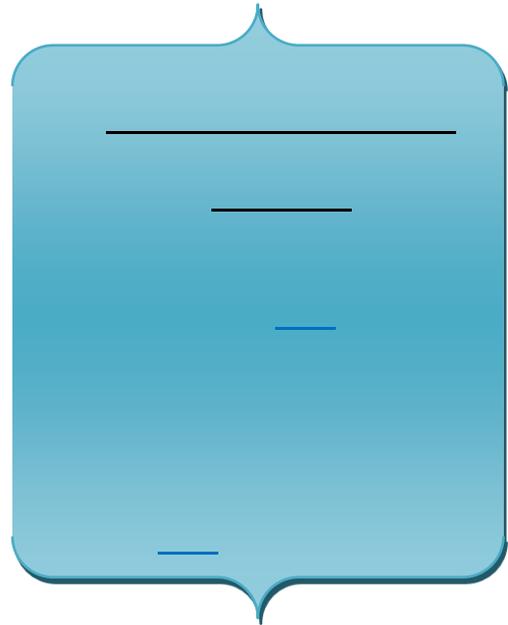
This report was made possible by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) (P.L.111-5), which made funding available to Minnesota to improve coordination and collaboration among early childhood education and care programs and services.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this evaluation was a series of semi-structured interviews and document reviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with program contacts and financial contacts in each district (see Appendix A for interview protocol). A total of eight interviews were conducted. Site visits were conducted in Rochester and Roseville. Student assessment data was gathered from Roseville.

Additionally, an online survey was created and sent to people in organizations identified by each district as a community partner in the implementation of the programs associated with this grant. The survey was sent to twenty-six community partners and twelve partners completed the survey.

Document review was an important component throughout this evaluation. The district applications for the grant, progress reports, meeting minutes from technical assistance phone calls facilitated by Minnesota Department of Education, program reports, and financial reports were the main documents reviewed during this evaluation



3. CONTEXT FOR THIS EVALUATION

As traditional funding streams for early education programs are in danger of being cut educators are simultaneously facing increasing pressure to improve school readiness for young students. In order to ensure that early learners have access to high-quality education, districts and states are developing strategies of efficiently and effectively maximizing the impact of the current funding

educators are simultaneously facing increasing pressure to improve school readiness for young students. In order to ensure that early learners have access to high-quality education, districts and states are developing strategies of efficiently and effectively maximizing the impact of the current funding available for early education programs. Layering streams “can help reduce duplication, increase the efficient use of resources, reduce the administrative burden of multiple categorical programs and fund early childhood supports and services that are more integrated and coordinated” (Finance Project, 2003, p.4). Using the ARRA funding appropriated by the Early Childhood Advisory Council active in June 2010, the Minnesota Department of Education solicited applications from early childhood programs for planning of a new initiative or implementation to scale-up an existing layering initiative. Ultimately, four districts were awarded these grants.

Layering funding is a way “to bring together traditionally separate services and programs and to create more integrated and responsive initiatives for young children and their families,”
(Finance Project, 2003, p. 3).

4. ACTIVITIES WITHIN EACH DISTRICT

Each district had different goals to address the unique needs of their student population. The program/s they established or expanded and the activities they carried out are described below:

Fergus Falls: This district applied for an implementation grant. The program served eighteen children, aged five, through Otter Extra Preschool (eight-week program) in the summer of 2011, in partnership with several community organizations. Early Childhood Family Education, School Readiness and Head Start staff collaborated on teaching, lesson planning and coordinating of field trips and conducting evaluations of student progress throughout the eight-week program. Three teachers were trained in Backwards by Design and they trained their Otter Preschool colleagues. In the words of Fergus Falls, “layering helped us accurately target children with the greatest educational needs” and “enabled

staff to provide hands-on and interested, focused instruction based on the educational themes and goals provided to us by our community partners,” (Fergus Falls Narrative Report, 11/3/2011).

Mountain Lake: This district applied for an implementation grant. Sixteen students were served through a six-week summer school for children entering kindergarten in fall 2011. A total of 21 students received scholarships to Discovery Preschool. Early childhood educators were served through one Super Saturday Training session and multiple professional development opportunities, such as a training session on the implementation of “Second Step” curricular materials (Evaluator Interview, 4/5/2012). Families were served through increased Mountain Lake Books 4 Kids visits (increased from six to eight visits), three Parent Connection Nights and the creation of an Early Childhood Resource/Referral Booklet which are given out in Early Childhood Family Education baby bags and at food shelf locations and preschool screenings. Ultimately, Mountain Lake was able to raise awareness among educators, agencies, and the community about the level of need for high-quality early childhood education services in their district, (Evaluator Interview, 4/5/2012).

Rochester: This district applied for an implementation grant. The Rochester School District was able to open a new SPARK (*School Partnerships Assuring Ready Kids*) classroom with the support of this grant. At the end of 2010-11 the SPARK program had served 68 children. With the support from the ARRA layering grant, Rochester was able to serve an additional 17 children in this second classroom, bringing the total children served in the SPARK program to 85 children in 2011-12. The SPARK staff (eleven teachers and three administrators) met five times throughout the year as a large group. The SPARK Staff Manual, which will improve communication regarding procedures and policies when layering and blending different programs, grew out of this collaboration (see the SPARK MANUAL in Appendix C). SPARK staff members were served through the provision of three training on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) through the University of Minnesota’s Center for Early Education and Development. Lastly, the Rochester School District used some of the ARRA layering grant

to support the development of Professional Learning Communities by paying for licensed staff to establish and provide coaching through the PLCs. The district hired two staff members to co-facilitate these PLC groups. Eleven SPARK teachers met over the course of the year holding 12 monthly PLC meetings. The PLC used various resources for their discussions, such as the book, *Powerful Interactions* by Dombro, Jablon and Stetson and the Classroom Assessment Scoring Systems (CLASS) materials. Each meeting focused on a section of one of these resources/tools. The facilitators prepared thoughtful questions ahead of time for staff to think about and discuss. Upon reflecting on the way they define layering in their district, Rochester administrators said that layering is going beyond an individual scope and combining some resources and funding to improve an outcome (Evaluator Interview, 4/19/2012) and “we know that pooling funding saves money,” (Evaluator Interview,5/1/2012).

Roseville: This district applied for a planning grant. The first component of the Roseville program was a five-week summer program for 22 children from the Karen community who were scheduled to enter kindergarten in the fall 2011. During the past school year, Roseville has had a number of Karen families move into the district directly from refugee camps in Thailand. Some of these families have had educational experiences in the refugee camps, however the district found few, if any, systems in place in the refugee camps to target preschool children (Roseville application). Each child’s progress was monitored with a readiness checklist of beginning skills and a checklist was sent to each of the student’s fall kindergarten teachers. The second component of the Roseville program was comprised of 12 Karen students, age four-five years old, who were enrolled in a preschool class from the Karen community who will enter kindergarten in the fall of 2012. At the start of the class, all of the children spoke Karen and had minimal English. One child had an Individual Educational Plan in place and in February 2012, an additional child was added to the class. The class met every Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. A variety of community services was offered including dental screenings and associated care and donated books were given to each family to keep at home. Reflecting on the success of their program, Roseville

administrators stated “each one of the students is a success” and “it’s relationships that sustain these types of classroom and make the program as enriching as possible. Relationships seem to be at the core of everything that you do. It’s not always money that people give, it’s the time that people are able to give us that make all the differences,” (Evaluator Interview, 3/21/2012).

5. FINDINGS

There were several important findings from the evaluation of this grant related to layering funding to increase access to high-quality early childhood education for young students.

A. Districts found that layering allowed partners to have easy access to each other in terms of sharing of materials, time, idea, and suggestions to smoothly implement programming.

This is beneficial for classrooms, program management and ultimately contributes to better outcomes for students. This finding was discussed in every interview with districts and in their final program reports. One of the most striking aspects of layering funding is that the act of layering funding streams to support one program created a chain effect of layering funding and/or resources for other programs. This in turn leads the implementation of more comprehensive early childhood education services and promotes a philosophy of inclusion. Roseville and Fergus Fall stated that the increased communication made possible through layering funding made collaboration easier and Rochester felt that improved communication was the greatest success of their experience with layering (Evaluator Interview,

B. Layering increased access not only to services in general but to evidence-based, high-quality early childhood services while proving to be financial efficient.

4/19/2012).

An example of high-quality programming that came out of the ARRA layering grant was the Roseville Karen classroom. Roseville's classroom met five days a week which provides a well-rounded, comprehensive education experience for students. Lastly, Fergus Falls attributes the increase in their students' school readiness to a low teacher-child ratio which is an evidence-based indicator of high-quality programming for young learners. Therefore, layering enabled student needs to be met through high-quality services across districts.

There were many other examples. Mountain Lake was able to provide preschool scholarships to children who would not have been able to attend without the grant. The district did not know of any child that was not given the opportunity to attend preschool (Mountain Lake Process Evaluation Questions, 5/9/2012). In Rochester, the partners involved in implementing this grant found that the SPARK classes are providing more inclusive opportunities within the school district. "These inclusive opportunities promote the 'our' children philosophy vs. the 'yours and mine' philosophy. This partnership has also allowed more children to have an experience with a neighborhood or local school which will help with the transition to kindergarten...and saved the Rochester School District money by providing quality preschool within the district as opposed to purchasing slots in local preschools which can be expensive," (Rochester Final Report, 5/1/2012).

Rochester was able to increase the quality of the programming through the provision of the following high-quality experiences for all of the staff of the partner programs: CLASS training, Work Sampling trainings, Book Studies and Professional Learning Communities. The Rochester administrators found

"These inclusive opportunities promote the 'our' children philosophy vs. the 'yours and mine' philosophy. This partnership has also allowed more children to have an experience with a neighborhood or local school which will help with the transition to kindergarten...and saved the Rochester School District money by providing quality preschool within the district as opposed to purchasing slots in local preschools which can be expensive."

(Rochester Final Report, 5/1/2012)

that providing these trainings provided the Rochester partners with a common language around instruction, saves money and builds stronger relationships amongst their early childhood teachers.

C. Though many positive and important programs were supported with this funding, the ARRA layering grant did not solve all issues around equity and access. Additional funding was desired in districts and each district feels strongly that the additional funding supplied by grant such as this ARRA layering grant is necessary to continue the this type of enhanced, expanded programming.

In Roseville Area Schools, literacy kits (take-home materials) and materials for the new classroom were not funded through this grant. This led to some staff members spending a great deal of time accessing other avenues in order to fully support the classroom as well as to seek additional funding to continue the program after the expiration of the grant (Roseville Layered Grant Evaluation, 5/2/2012). Therefore, layering helped the districts in the 2011-2012 school year but this financial support is necessary in the eyes of the districts for sustainable programming. Each district expressed frustration that the services implemented in the 2011-2012 school year might not continue because the funding from this grant was for a one-year period only.

Being part of a school district allowed programs to access services and revenue streams needed to provide early education program, such as a preschool classroom, with all the necessary components: a food program, transportation, facility, health services, etc. (Roseville Layered Grant Evaluation, 5/2/2012)

6. OPPORTUNITIES

a. The first opportunity highlighted by this grant was the idea that school districts are an excellent mechanism for layering funding. For example, Roseville Area Schools blended their areas of

expertise in order to accomplish their goal of implementing a classroom for Karen children. Roseville Early Childhood Family Education provided supervision, budget management and additional resources while Adult Basic Education and Title I provided some funding while still other departments provided materials for the classroom. All of these partners were able to come together relatively smoothly because they were all part of one school district.

b. The second opportunity highlighted by the ARRA layering grant was that the very process of layering funding can increase collaboration and enhance communication among agencies and organizations. Mountain Lake found that during their Early Childhood Initiative meetings, if an agency wanted assistance related to providing a specific activity, the agency would state that they wanted to provide a service and needed help. For example, “Help Me Grow” wanted to do an early screening and needed the following help: a location, child care for siblings and a snack. After hearing these needs, other agencies offered up what they could provide to make the screening happen. Agencies stepped in to collaborate on other projects unrelated to the ARRA layering grant once the process of layering had begun. Once the channels of communication for collaboration were opened and used, the resources and support of agencies and organizations can more readily be accessed for partnerships.

7. CHALLENGES/BARRIERS

Districts identified both programmatic and operational challenges. Due to the unique nature of each district’s program, this evaluation report will focus on operational challenges experienced by the districts to provide a body of knowledge about challenges in layering funding. Sustainable funding is an operational challenge that is shared by all districts and was mentioned in every interview and final progress report. The districts self-reported few barriers but there were some common themes throughout the implementation of the grant across the districts that were revealed as barriers to successfully layering funding to increase access to early childhood services.

a. Challenge: More adequate planning time at the beginning of the grant period would have helped the districts clarify roles, responsibilities, expectation, and the capacity of each program partner.

Each district reported that they would have benefitted from a longer period of planning time. Because many districts were expanding or starting programs with this grant, including summer programming, and the grant was awarded at the end of the previous school year (May 2011), districts were forced to work quickly to remain within time limitations.

Example/Evidence: Roseville Area Schools wanted a specific partner to play a larger collaborative role in regard to parent engagement. This department was a crucial partner in providing transportation and financial support but Roseville Area Schools also expected the department to take a third step as a collaborative partner in parent engagement. There was significant enrollment growth in this partner's program this year which affected their capacity to fulfill this expectation. If roles and responsibilities, as well as capacity and expectations, had been discussed during planning time, the partners involved in the Roseville program may have been able address these constraints at the outset, (Evaluator Interview, 3/21/2012).

Mountain Lake felt that more adequate planning time at the beginning of the grant period was necessary (Evaluator Interview, 04/05/2012). The district was completing the 2010 – 2011 school year when they were notified that they had received the grant so they “had to scurry a bit,” (Evaluator Interview, 4/5/2012). Mountain Lake believes that a planning period provides time to ensure that all ideas are seen as valid as districts and partners move toward a shared plan and common good, without any particular agency or partners defined as being more important than any other (Evaluator Interview, 4/5/2012).

b. Challenge: Defining the layering term and practices associated with layering varies across districts and programs. The definition of “layering” is still unclear and this is evidenced in the ways in which districts interpreted the word and applied it to their early childhood programming.

Example/Evidence: In Roseville, layering meant to combine services and efforts while in Mountain Lake, layering meant increased communication within agencies and increasing awareness and participation among agencies about the needs of early learners. Section Four of this report demonstrates the differences across districts in interpreting the term “layering” and implementing layering. Some districts used portions of the ARRA layering grant to fill in gaps in service provision, such as Fergus Falls, while others, such as Rochester, used the grant to establish Professional Learning Communities which allowed staff members from different programs to come together for professional development opportunities. The terminology is becoming more common but the activities related to the term “layering” vary widely.

c. Challenge: Consistent communication and convenient meeting times can be difficult to establish across partnerships. Districts experienced challenges in communicating regularly with some partners or when there were many agencies and organizations involved in a project. There were varying levels of responsiveness from some partners that made it a challenge to arrange for some participation.

Example/Evidence: Mountain Lake found that the more agencies involved, the more difficulties they encountered finding “a common meeting time –or a date for the activity – or something would come up that would prevent an agency from actually being able to meet,” (Process Evaluation Questions, Mountain Lake, 5/9/2012). Roseville Area Schools envisioned more involvement from a partner but they were not responsive to phone calls. This was possibly due to the fact that the 2011 – 2012 school year unusually oversubscribed for this partner.

d. Challenge: When working across programs, deadlines and calendars regarding contracts and funding may not overlap. This can be difficult when establishing inclusive environments.

Example/Evidence: Rochester experienced a challenge with calendars. Due to the different teacher contracts (or lack of contracts) and different sources of funding, Rochester partners in the

layering grant did not always match. Rochester had to continually adjust their program calendar each year. This can be challenging when attempting to bring many partners together to agree on a timeline.

e. Unique challenge reported by Rochester: Data confidentiality. In Rochester's experience with layering funding and partners for one program, they had to continually deal with confidentiality and release of information issues because one of their partners is a non-district program. This challenge was not highlighted by other districts. When multiple programs come together to serve students, some programs may not have the same level of access to student data as other programs, especially if a partner is a non-district entity.

8. SUCCESSES

This ARRA layering grant fostered several successes in school districts, both in terms of serving children and in terms of enhancing the body of knowledge about layering funding for early childhood education in Minnesota.

a. Success: Layering of different funding streams did take place to create new programming and enhance services for children.

Example/Evidence: Roseville Area Schools combined this grant with ELL and ABE funding, and the remainder of the district's Safe Schools, Healthy Students federal grant money to create entirely new summer and school-year programs (Roseville Area Schools Final Program Report, 4/30/2012). In Rochester, a referral form was developed throughout the course of the implementation of this grant that allows district contacts to obtain information directly from the Mayo Clinic. This interagency communication results in a referral form that has been helpful for the Rochester School Early Childhood Screening Coordinator who screens children for a variety of needs, including vision and hearing. This staff member was also able to make contacts in the Public Health Department. This has enhanced the

ability of the Rochester community to assess and meet the needs of early learners in their district (Evaluator Community Partner Survey, 2012). Lastly, all districts were able to increase the number of students served in the early childhood programming available in their districts.

b. Success: Layering also occurred when agencies and community partners shared materials, space, buses, and other resources, thereby increasing capacity for the programs.

Example/Evidence: Sharing of resources across programs and organizations to serve students took place in every district. Some unique examples include the provision of much-needed snow pants from the ECFE Parent Advisory Council, volunteers from the ABE program, dental health services from community practitioners, literacy materials from ELL and books from Half-Priced Books. “Most of the other districts are aware of the need to find more money to serve underserved children to enter the school system. It’s relationships that sustain these types of classrooms and make the program as enriching as possible,” (Evaluator Interview, 03/21/2012).

Relationships seem to be at the core of everything that you do. It’s not always money that people give, it’s the time that people are able to give us that make all the differences,”
(Evaluator Interview, 3/21/2012).

c. Students in summer programs had their school readiness tracked and reported to kindergarten teachers before the start of the school year. Through sharing this assessment data, students entered kindergarten classrooms in which teachers were prepared for their targeted needs.

Example/Evidence: While all school districts did this, Roseville Area Schools provided the kindergarten teachers of the Karen children and the Minnesota Department of Education with a copy of results from a simplified checklist of readiness skills from the *Work Sampling Assessment System of Assessment*. All students went from limited or no-English skills to recognizing and beginning to write

their names, identifying shapes and colors and showed growth in the pictures they could identify over the course of the grant period. This is indicative of the growth young students in programs with layered funding and resources.

9. LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

There were important lessons learned through the evaluation of the ARRA layering grant that contribute to the body of knowledge about layering throughout the state and can be disseminated through the form of “best practices.”



Practice in Action: Mountain Lake Public Schools worked with the Early Childhood Initiative (ECI) before the district received the ARRA layering grant. Through the ECI, Mountain Lake Public Schools has formed a partnership with Good Samaritan Society. This partnership helped fill gaps in programming throughout the year in unexpected ways. In past school years, Mountain Lake Public Schools has held an event at the fire station during fire prevention week, averaging \$400-\$500 on food. In 2011 – 2012, Mountain Lake was out of money to implement this program so the Good Samaritan partner stepped forward to facilitate the production of the food through their nursing home kitchen facility. Good Samaritan Society’s nursing home donated the labor and the district only incurred grocery expenses. In Rochester, because Early Childhood Family Education, School Readiness, and Early Childhood Special Education had partnered previously, they were successful in sharing resources to cover the cost of SPARK classes.

Lesson #2: Peer-to-peer sharing of lessons learned and best practices is the best method of increasing the practice of layering funding in Minnesota. Districts benefit from discussing strategies and activities involved in layering with each other.

Practice in Action: Districts are taking their individual experiences with the ARRA layering grant and sharing them with other agencies. Rochester, for example, reported that they learned a great deal about layering during a teleconference call with an Itasca County group. This group shared resources and provided lessons learned for some early childhood community partners and Rochester, in turn, was able to implement layering of funding in their district with great success. Rochester has shared their layering experiences with the ECFE and School Readiness Advisory Council, Head Start and through a *Focus on the Children Conference* panel discussion. The district intends to add some of the lessons of the partnership in their fall 2012 Early Childhood Family Education newsletter and/or on the district website. Rochester plans on calling it a *Spotlight on Partnerships* and will extend an invitation to others to partner for the benefit of young children (ARRA Final Report, 5/1/2012). Rochester also hopes to share their lessons with partners such as Maternal Child Health Committee, First Steps/Rochester Area Foundation, local preschool partners and United Way in the coming months. This further increases awareness about the practice of layering funding through the district and throughout state organizations and agencies.

This peer-to-peer sharing also took place in Roseville. The

“Our best advice is to meet often, openly communicate with each other, realize it will be impossible for you and your partners to think of each little detail that will require attention but be ready to meet to work out as quickly as possible, be willing to give up some of your identity—your program becomes one. These little things helped us transition with success.”
(Fergus Falls Progress Report, 11/11)

teacher in the Roseville Karen classroom was very experienced working with preschool children who had similar backgrounds. She possessed extraordinary classroom management, working with inexperienced teacher assistants and recruiting volunteers. This truly helped the teaching assistants and the overall functioning of this classroom. The positive experiences in this Karen classroom motivated one of the teacher assistants to invest her time and energy in promoting the classroom to the district's local legislator, school board members, and other kindergarten teachers in the district by producing several DVDs about the classroom and the students' progress. She also worked on finding additional revenue sources to keep the classroom going after the expiration of the grant. Her efforts in educating those around the district about this classroom and the practice of layering resources contributed to the sustainability of the classroom.

Lesson #3: Be realistic about the gaps that may exist or may arise throughout the year in funding and partnerships.

Practice in Action: Begin researching revenue sources for possible sustainability funding as soon as possible. Anticipate how funding and partnerships will need to be changed/adjusted for sustainability. Roseville Area Schools consistently sought out additional resources for sustainability after the expiration of the grant. They pursued all known avenues of sustainability, including resources that had never been used for pre-kindergarten by the Roseville district in the past as a way to sustain the classroom. They also explored several other avenues to sustain the classroom: private funders such as Target, General Mills, Otto Bremer Foundation, Title 1 and the English as a Second Language Program. In June 2012, they were able to announce that Title 1 funds will be part of the resources used to sustain the Karen classroom into another year.

Lesson #4: When best practices are identified, disseminate the findings. Dissemination of these best practices serve as models for other districts who are seeking methods, best practices, and strategies for layering of early childhood funding.

Practice in Action: Through the conversations and interviews that took place throughout the evaluation, districts were able to reflect upon the best practices identified in their districts which led to some of these practices being cemented into policies. By creating the SPARK Manual, Rochester will improve communication regarding procedures and policies when layering different programs. They also believe that as a district, they “are able to provide information and support to the early childhood community by focusing attention on quality school readiness early childhood programming, not only for children enrolled in SPARK, but for all children in our community,” (ARRA Final Report, 4/2012). The experience in Roseville demonstrates that layering funding can, and indeed does, increase access to high-quality early childhood programming for underserved populations.

10. CONCLUSION

Identify the community partners that a program or district already collaborates with and communicate early about:

- **intended goals for the program**
- **capacity and resources each partner can contribute to meeting those goals**
- **ideas about which organizations or partners need to be secured to fill gaps.**

The practice of layering, and the experiences that these districts had with the ARRA layering grant, demonstrates that there is a desire to both better define the layering terminology and put this idea into practice throughout Minnesota. There is an opportunity to share these lessons and raise awareness about the important programming that can be provided to underserved early learners through layering of funding and resources. “As a society, we have to look out for our youngest citizens. When I look at the number of kids who need scholarships and don’t get them, I

think about what the start of kindergarten will look like for them,” said a Mountain Lake administrator. The start of kindergarten looks bright for the students who were able to access programming through the provision of this ARRA layering grant and the work of the agencies and organizations that implemented layering to draw knowledge from multiple entities to meet the needs of young children in their communities.

REFERENCES

Flynn, Margaret & Cheryl D. Hayes. (January 2003). “Blending and Braiding Funds to Support to Support Early Care and Education Initiative.” Financing Strategy Series by The Finance Project.

Grant applications from each district (2/2011)

Progress reports from all districts (11/2011)

Technical Assistance Phone call (3/15/2012)

Evaluator Interview with Fergus Falls (4/4/2012) and (4/30/2012)

Evaluator Interview with Mountain Lake (4/5/2012) and (4/26/2012)

Evaluator Interview with Roseville (3/21/2012) and (5/2/2012)

Evaluator Interview with Rochester (4/19/2012) and (4/30/2012)

Final reports from all districts (5/2012)

APPENDIX A: Interview Protocol for Program Contacts (updated 4/2/2012)

1. Describe the demographics of your district.

2. What were the greatest successes in the Layering grant process?

Context for answering this question: Success stories from participants; status reports from where all programs are on 4/31/2012 when the granting period closes; enrollment numbers; participant feedback.

- Sources that might be useful for answering this question: Financial expenditure reports; Progress reports; OGAN documents; Enrollment reports; Announcements and Awareness-raising materials sent out to parents in the districts.

3. What were the greatest challenges in the Layering Grant process?

Context for answering this question: Frustrations and failed attempts from districts; enrollment numbers; program stories.

4. How was the grant money spent in your district?

Context for answering this question: The grants were \$50K.

- Sources that might answer this question: Financial documents; stories from financial personnel

5. Did your district allocate additional funds or resources over the course of the program/effort?) If so, what was the source and amount of this additional funding and how was this additional funding secured?

6. This is a two part question:

- a. Did layering increase access to any services (which services?)? If so, how? What changes (if any) did you see in the classroom component of your program? What do you think might be the mechanisms for (reasons for?) this change?**
- b. What changes (if any) did you see in the professional development component of your program? What do you think might be the mechanisms for (reasons for?) this change?**

7. What community partners did your layering program engage? Were any of those partnerships new or unlikely given your past programming efforts? Were these partnerships formal (did organizations provide money or transportation or teaching assistants) or informal (did organizations loan you materials or supplies)?

Context for answering this question: Names of the partnerships, if any, established and identification of the “unlikely partners.” Determine whether or not these previously informal relationships that were formalized or brand new partnerships. Identify how these partnerships come about and the kind of support provided. Identify the greatest challenges/successes in cross-partner communication. Identify the challenges and successes districts experience when making operational decisions with partners

about the program. Determine whether or not the partnerships will continue after the granting period ends.

8. What strategies or practices in implementing your *program* would you say worked really well at accomplishing the goal of increasing enrollment/access to these early learning services?

9. In your district, did you combine several initiatives or entities into a new collaboration for this *initiative*? What lessons did you learn from the experience? How were you able to maintain the organizational independence with this collaboration?

Context for answering this question: Process for identifying partners and soliciting their help and publicizing/formalizing their roles; Partner communications; Program materials; Discussion of assessments used.

Note: In these types of collaboration, you want the lines to blur and have fewer distinctions between programs (with exception of how the money is tracked.) A goal would be to have a unified program and that, at the very least, the public wouldn't be able to tell that there are separate programs.

10. Have you created sustainable funding? Have you created sustainable program components?

- Context for answering this question: Identification of current & future funding roles of partners and program components included in future district planning.

11. How do you want MDE to use this evaluation?

Financial Personnel Interview (Updated 4/16/2012)

1. How was the grant money for "ARRA - Incentives to Communities to Support Layering of Early Childhood Funding in Order to Increase Participation of Children in Programs" spent in your district?

Note: The grants were \$50K.

Sources that might answer this question: Financial documents; stories from financial personnel

2. What funding sources went to support programming associated with the Layering grant?

3. What efficiencies were you able to employ? In what way did you use funds/resources more efficiently?

4. Did your district allocate additional funds or resources over the course of the program/effort? If so, what was the source and amount of this additional funding and how was this additional funding secured?

5. In your district, were several funding streams combined or did the grant money fund individual projects?

Context for answering this question: Process for identifying partners and soliciting their help and publicizing/formalizing their roles; Partner communications; Program materials; Discussion of assessments used.

6. What community partners did your layering program engage?

- **Did any of these partnerships provide services for free?**
- **Did any of these partnerships provide services for a reduced cost?**

Context for answering this question: Names of the partnerships, if any, established and identification of the “unlikely partners. Identify how these partnerships come about and the kind of support provided. Identify the greatest challenges/successes in cross-partner funding. Determine whether or not the partnerships will continue after the granting period ends.

7. What were the advantages or disadvantages of blending funding?

8. Has the district created any sustainable funding?

APPENDIX B – Survey for Community Partners

What is your name and the name of your organization/agency?

Otter Tail County Department of Solid WastePat Baloun SWWC Service CooperativeGood Samaritan of Mountain lakeErin Smith, Fergus Falls Public LibraryCarma Bjornson/Crisis NurseryKate Iverson/Communit...

Please describe your role (for example: ELL contact within a district) and/or the role of your organization (for example: provided transportation services for free) in the Incentives to Communities to Support Layering of Early Childhood Funding in Order to Increase Participation of Children in Programs.

Town N Country Daycare--set up training for my part of the grant. Found trainers, set up topics, chose date of training and hosted the training. Also got co-sponsorship with CCR&R which is good for child care providers as trainings then are added to their registry.We are Roseville's Adult Basic Education (ABE) program. We are embeded in Community Education, and try to seamlessly collaborate with ECFE. Our learners are the parents of many of the children in the grant, and family literacy is a crucial element of what our learners need and want. We fund a bus to pick up our learners at seve...

How did you first learn about the program in the district that was supported by the Incentives to Communities to Support Layering of Early Childhood Funding in Order to Increase Participation of Children in Programs?

Sherry Pankratz talked to me about writing for the grant and asked for my ideas. Our daycare is located in the elementary school and we are involved in the district is different ways.I was involved in writing the grant from the very beginning.During the time that the class was being planned, a student was evaluated and this class fit the description of what he needed. A placement was made that originally included shared time in an Early Childhood Special Education classroom three sessions per week. After the start of the school year, the student 's IEP team met and determined that placeme...

How did your partnership with the school district change over the course of the year?

We have always had a good relationship with the school and that hasn't changed.We have supplied Karen interpreters out of our academic programs, and one of our graduates has become a teaching assistant in the ECFE classroom.My answers to both questions above provide an explanation of the way that the partnership expanded. The program was enriched through this partnership.We were able to expand the audience we did parent meetings with. The 3 parent connection nights were focused toward the parents of the Head Start program, Discovery Preschool and the school daycare. Through the grant the ...

Describe the challenges during your partnership with the school district to implement this program.

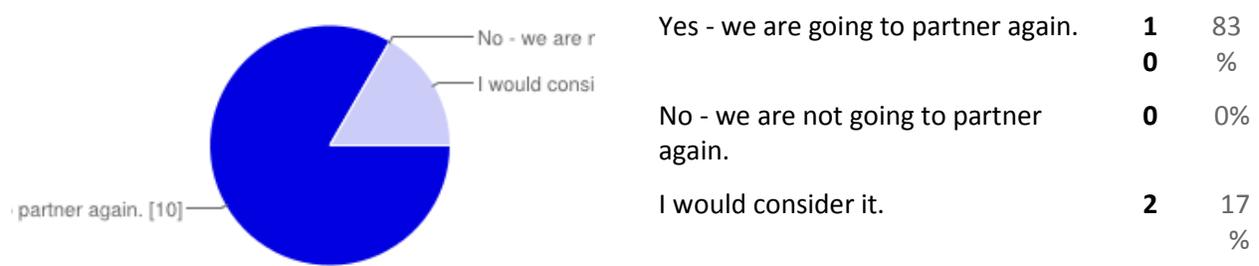
I didn't face any challenges with the school district.The collaboration has gone well. We are subject to variations in funding, and lost our funding for the bus. We have continued to pay for the bus out of our operating budgets, though it is not sustainable in the long run.Calendars between the programs are not the same so that made for some confusion.The only challenge we faced was parent participation at the parent connection nights. The turnout wasn't as large as we anticipated.We have had the opportunity to work with several student groups. As students come and go based on changing sc...

Describe the successes during your partnership with the school district to implement this program.

We had a wonderful turn out for our training. Participants enjoyed their time--I received many compliments for the day. Our trainers were great.We feel as though this collaboration has helped with retention, both the children in the grant and the parents in our program.Giving the particular student that I have described the support in both English and his home language was an invaluable start for his

school experience. Sharing ideas, space, and resources and having students with and without disabilities encountering each other has been a positive experience for everyone. We have a strong g...

Are you planning on partnering again or would you consider it?



Please share any additional comments and/or feedback about your participation in this partnership.

Please consider extending the grants to multiple years and more classrooms. I is a wonderful opportunity. Thank you for making this grant possible and enabling us to do such great things for the children in Mt. Lake! Our organization has always believed that students, starting at very young ages, are the backbone of our programs and services and we look forward and welcome the opportunity to continue working with them. I feel it is a great program and that we have been able to do many thing in the community to help preschool children and would like to see it continuelt is a great partnership. ...

APPENDIX C – SPARK Manual



2011-2012 School Readiness/ECFE/ECSE Inclusion Class Staff Manual

This manual is intended to help all staff with questions regarding policies and procedures. The policies in this manual are to assist the early childhood inclusion classes to function efficiently and constructively.

PAIR's MISSION STATEMENT:

“Strengthening families with young children through education and support.”

SCHOOL READINESS MISSION STATEMENT:

“Preparing families and children for school success.”

SPARK

SPARK stands for **S**chool **P**artnerships **A**ssuring **R**eady **K**ids. SPARK classes are a partnership between Early Childhood Family Education/School Readiness and Early Childhood Special Education.

SPARK is team-taught by one ECFE teacher and one ECSE teacher. Students are placed in class through ECSE or School Readiness. (Up to eight children from each program) SR students attend three-four half days per week, depending upon the time/location of class.

All SPARK students should be 3-5 years of age on or before 9/1/2011 and have

a SPARK registration form filled out with PAIR.

Class	Room	phone	SR days time
ECFE/ESCSE Churchill	5A	328-3137	9:00-11:30
SPARK Gibbs	128	328-4154	1:00-3:30
SPARK Jefferson AM	108	328- 3470	9:00-11:30
SPARK Jefferson PM	108	328- 3470	1:00- 3:30
SPARK Sunset Terrace AM	127	328-3766	9:00-11:30
SPARK Sunset Terrace PM	125	328-3736	1:00-3:30

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACTS BY PROGRAM

All staff working for Head Start can be reached by typing in the first name, followed by the last initial, and @c2r2.org. For example jillaynes@c2r2.org. All school district employees can be reached by the first two letters of the first name, last name, @rochester.k12.mn.us Example mestenke@rochester.k12.mn.us .

Child Care Resource and Referral School Readiness Staff

(Names and phone numbers withheld for the purposes of this report)

Early Childhood Family Education - PAIR

(Names and phone numbers withheld for the purposes of this report)

Early Childhood Special Education Staff

(Names and phone numbers withheld for the purposes of this report)

Classroom and Building Information and Etiquette

Classroom Schedules

While planning classroom schedules, remember to discuss the best time for your paraprofessionals to take a break. Classroom schedules/break times

should be posted in the room for everyone to access. Break time should be staggered between employees so not everyone is taking a break at the same time. Break times should be taken outside of the classroom as not to confuse children about accessibility of person on a break.

It is important to have teachers accessible during class time. This is a time to make interact and make positive connections with the children in your class. Remember to set the standard and the example for paraprofessionals and assistants/volunteers who may also be in the classroom.

Conflict Management

While working together as a team, set up your room and teaching arrangement in a manner that will work for both teachers. If conflict should arise, please be professional and try to resolve issues between teachers. If resolution between team members is not possible, please bring unresolved issues to your direct supervisor.

Cell Phones

Cell phone etiquette is required in all classrooms. Please refrain from answering your cell phone during class. Some of your families may call you during the day. Please take the time to check your messages before and after class as well as on your breaks. As a team, come to an agreement for how you want families to call in a child's absence (i.e. call school office/cell phone prior to the start of school, then call transportation office to cancel bussing. Bussing would only be for ECSE families. Please talk to your families to let them know how you would like them to proceed. Share the office phone number with your families so they know how to reach you during the day in the event of an emergency.

Building/Miscellaneous

Policies may be different for each school building. As a best practice, please introduce yourself to the building principal/office staff and custodians. Remember to wear your name tag, all visitors must check in at the front office. Please make yourselves familiar with code orange, fire, and tornado drill and lockdown procedures.

Staff meetings at the beginning of the year are a great way to meet other people in the building, as well as to hear building policies and procedures. Someone from your team should attend these meetings as appropriate. In addition, talk as a team about your participation in PLC's (Professional Learning Communities) in your building. This is a great way to get involved in goal planning at the Early Childhood level as well as vertically

with what children need to know when entering Kindergarten. The level of your participation should be discussed with your immediate supervisor.

Most buildings have implemented PBS (Positive Behavioral Supports). Please discuss as a team what your building has in place and how all children/teachers will support this philosophy.

Related Service Providers

Many of our classrooms have SLP's (Speech Language Pathologists), OT's (Occupational Therapists), PT's (Physical Therapists), and many more acronyms entering the classroom on a weekly/monthly basis. Please make sure to introduce everyone and talk about how this may affect your schedule.

Class Lists

Class lists should be given to the clerical staff at the buildings with emergency information and parental contact information completed.

Resources

All of the programs contribute to the resources and supplies for the classroom. Contact either Amy Ward or Shawna Felton to request or order classroom supplies.

REGISTRATION AND ORIENTATION

Meet the Teacher

Our expectation is for all students to meet their teacher prior to the start of the school year. As a team, please plan how to reach all your families. In the past, some have decided to invite each family in at a separate time to meet. Others have taken advantage of the *Meet the Teacher* time designated to each building which is more like an open house. Please plan for what works best for your team. ECSE teachers, you need to be present in your building for the *Meet the Teacher* time.

Registration

Each program will have an equal number of spots for the class. SPARK registration forms should be completed on each child/family and submitted to Jeanette Nelson at the PAIR office in a timely manner and/or before the child starts class. If you have any questions regarding this, call Jeanette at XXX-XXXX.

SCHOOL READINESS FAMILY ADVOCATES/HOME VISITORS

School Readiness Family Advocates are assigned to each of the schools at the beginning of the school year and they work with the School Readiness families who attend those schools for the entire year. This Family Advocate will assist you with meeting the needs of the family and child. Family Advocates will make contact and introduce themselves to the teachers at the beginning of the school year.

Family Advocates are responsible for communicating and assisting teachers and families in preparing the child and family for Kindergarten. Family Advocates will inform teachers when they plan home visits so that the teacher(s) may attend if so desired or send ideas with Family Advocate for parent/child activities. They will provide resources to families if requested.

EARLY CHILDHOOD SCREENING

For School Readiness Families: Each family enrolled in the program is required to complete their child's Early Childhood Screening within 90 days of entrance into the program. Families should call XXX-XXXX to make an appointment.

School Readiness staff will ensure completion of the screening by cross checking screenings with the Rochester Public School's Early Childhood Screening Department. The screenings are checked in December, March and May.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT – PARTNERS IN EDUCATION (PIE) GROUPS

For School Readiness Families: Families are required to attend three PIE (Partners in Education) groups and three family events throughout the school year. Families are informed of Partners in Education Groups and family events a number of ways including: parent orientation, parent manual, home visits and newsletters.

Families from both programs are invited to attend family events and PIE (Partners in Education) groups. There is limited space, so families will need to contact Teresa Klement in School Readiness to reserve a spot. Families will be placed on the waiting list if the spots are full.

STUDENT and STAFF ABSENCES

Jeanette (PAIR office) receives monthly attendance on the School Readiness children and submits this report with billing to Teresa or Jillayne at School Readiness. Please notify the Family Advocate assigned to your school at the time that a child accumulates four consecutive absences that are not due to illness or vacation.

ECSE absences are reported to either ECSE or PAIR. SR absences are reported to PAIR.

Staff Absence-Substitutes

In the case of a licensed teacher absence another licensed teacher will be found. All staff will use the district's sub finder.

CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT AND DATA INFORMATION

Curriculum

This year teams will use Scott Foresman reading curriculum, Everyday Math curriculum and Second Step curriculum. We also have Creative Curriculum and Opening the World of Learning (OWL) available at PAIR. Each person will bring a different level of confidence or experience with the different curriculums. Please share your knowledge and experience with your co-teacher

Additionally, ECSE staff will also be collecting data on IEP goals, AEPS, and Essential Outcomes. Please have conversations as a team about the data you are collecting. Share the information with one another for the students, while always respecting confidentiality.

For School Readiness Families—SPARK staff will need to complete the Work Sampling three or four Year Checklist Report Form in fall, mid-year and in the spring or at the time of termination of service on all children who would not be exempt from kindergarten assessments. The evaluation form will be provided by Rochester School Readiness and should be submitted to Michelle at the PAIR program. In addition, School Readiness staff will complete mid-year evaluations with the teachers (ECSE and ECFE) one time per year. The Family Advocates will contact the teachers in December to January to set up a time to meet with them to go over the schools mid year evaluations that are completed by the SPARK staff. The SR staff can meet to go over what the teachers have done for mid-year evaluations. We have to do the fall mid-year and spring work sampling forms for United Way outcomes reporting but mid-

year meetings could be something different.

School Readiness and ECSE representatives from the Minnesota Department of Education may review early childhood services in the school/center and monitor the children and program. This includes scheduled and drop-in visits from authorized staff and administration.

An Early Language and Literacy Environment Checklist will be administered one time each service year for each classroom with participating CCRR School Readiness children. Staff will receive the scores of the Checklist once it has been completed, along with suggestions for improvements if necessary. Staff will have access to the checklist at the beginning of the year.

IGDI's (Individual Growth and Development Inventory) will be completed in the fall and spring on all children who will not be exempt from kindergarten assessments. Four-year-olds will be assessed with Picture Naming, Alliteration, and Rhyming. Three-year-olds will be assessed with Picture Naming only. The scores on these assessments are compared to their kindergarten DIBELS scores.

A Pre-K Assessment will be completed in the spring on four year olds going to kindergarten

We will create a chart with our assessments – what is required, when due, and who will be given what assessments.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES AND IEP MEETINGS

For School Readiness Families---the site agrees to schedule two parent-teacher conferences for each child and notify the School Readiness Program if there is a lack of attendance by a parent/guardian at the scheduled meeting. ECSE staff will be asked for their input and/or participation in these conferences. These conferences may be done on a home visit.

ECSE Families – At least one IEP meeting will be held with each family to review student progress on IEP goals and objectives and to write new IEP's for each student. The ECSE teacher will also complete quarterly home visits with each family to share student progress, observations at school and to discuss how we can support the child and family at home. ECFE teachers are welcome to go on the home visits with the ECSE teachers.

SPARK/ECSE/ECFE EARLY CHILDHOOD STAFF MEETINGS

The SPARK staff will meet quarterly throughout the school year. The dates for these meetings will be the 3rd Thursdays of the following months from 4-5:00pm.

- September 15-Churchill

- November 17-Gibbs
- February 16- Jefferson
- April 19- Sunset Terrace

HOME VISITS

For School Readiness Families—The School Readiness Family Advocates and/or teachers complete two home visits per year with each family enrolled in the program. Home visits are designed to provide support for both parent and child on their journey to kindergarten. The home visit includes: file folder games for the children to support their learning, resource sharing and goal setting with the parents, books and literacy kits for the children, and assisting the family with understanding and completing the kindergarten registration process.

ECSE – The ECSE teachers complete quarterly home visits with each family to share student progress, observations at school and to discuss how we can support the child and family at home.

COMMUNICATION WITH SUPERVISORS REGARDING STUDENTS

SPARK staff are encouraged to speak directly with their program supervisor as situations with students arise or email both supervisors (Shawna Felton and Peggy O'Toole-Martin) to explain the situation and request a course of action. If one supervisor is contacted, she will be responsible for informing the other supervisor(s) of the situation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information regarding participants cannot be given to anyone outside the Rochester School District or School Readiness Program without a signed release of information from the parent or guardian. Each program will make sure that the appropriate forms have been completed for any sharing of information.

PICTURES

Students will fill out the district's emergency contact info with photo release on the back. We must also make sure to be very careful with using pictures of children with disabilities in a way that identifies them as having a disability.

MANDATED REPORTING

All staff are mandated reporters and must comply with Minnesota Statutes, Section 626.556 regarding the protection of children whose health or welfare may be harmed through physical abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse. As required by state law, all staff must report concerns of suspected child abuse and/or neglect to local child protection agencies.

Reporting Policy for Programs Providing Services to children

Who Should Report Child Abuse and Neglect

Any person may voluntarily report abuse or neglect. If you know or have reason to believe a child is being or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused within the preceding three years you must immediately (within 24 hours) make a report to an outside agency.

Where to Report

If you know or suspect that a child is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1. Reports regarding incidents of suspected abuse or neglect of children occurring within a family or in the community should be made to the local county social services office at 507-328-6400 or local law enforcement at 507-328-6800. Reporting forms are available at each site. All Staff are also instructed to send a sealed copy of report marked "confidential" to the Human Rights Coordinator, Edison Building, as documentation that a report has been made.

What to Report

Definitions of maltreatment are contained in the Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors Act (Minnesota Statutes, section 626.556). An oral report of suspected abuse or neglect made to one of the above agencies by a mandated reporter must be followed by a written report to the same agency within 72 hours, exclusive of weekends and holidays.

Failure to Report

A mandated reporter who knows or has reason to believe a child is or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused and fails to report is guilty of a misdemeanor. In addition, a mandated reporter who fails to report maltreatment that is found to be serious or recurring maltreatment may be disqualified from employment in positions allowing direct contact with persons receiving services from programs licensed by the Department of Human Services and by the Minnesota Department of Health and Unlicensed Personal Care Provider Organizations.