ECE Needs Assessment

Prepared for Minneapolis Public Schools – Early Childhood Education

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Introduction

In the spring of 2015, Minneapolis Public Schools Early Childhood Education (MPS ECE) partnered with Wilder Research to conduct a community needs assessment of Minneapolis families with young children (under age 6). The research was initiated by a requirement from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) that Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) programs conduct a community needs assessment, but MPS ECE elected to conduct a more in-depth needs assessment to help inform the breadth of their early childhood programming, including ECFE, pre-kindergarten programming, and early childhood screening approaches.

In order to meet MDE's reporting deadline of July 15 and help staff plan for the upcoming school year, this report provides a preliminary review of data related to the three components required by MDE (noted below), with a specific look at ECFE. A more comprehensive report will follow in the fall of 2015.

1. Identify new and underserved populations.
2. Identify child and family risk factors, particularly those that impact children's learning and development.
3. Assess family and parenting education needs in the community.

Research methods

Secondary data analysis

Wilder analyzed secondary data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2009-2013 5-year American Community Survey, the U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Decennial Census, the 2010 Hennepin County SHAPE Survey, and Minnesota Department of Health birth records from 2009-2013 on indicators that describe the population, and risk and protective factors. Census data were analyzed by MPS's three zones, when possible.

Data were compared with information about who is currently being served by MPS ECE to determine new and/or underserved populations (research question 1).

Interviews with community partners

Wilder conducted 21 key informant interviews with community partners from 20 separate agencies. MPS ECE staff identified 25 community partner agencies, as well as key contact people. In some cases the identified individuals referred a colleague they felt was more knowledgeable about the topic. Those requests were honored. Wilder contacted identified community partners via email and phone to schedule an interview time and completed interviews over the phone. Data were analyzed for key themes using AtlasTI software. Responses related to the three research questions are reported herein with a more detailed analysis to follow in a future report.

Survey of parents

Wilder developed a two-page survey of parents that was administered to a convenience sample. Minneapolis Public Schools Early Childhood Education staff handed out the surveys to young families coming to MPS facilities as well as at community partner sites. A total of 300 surveys were collected in late May and early June 2015; 70 were excluded due to ineligibility – either the respondent lives outside of Minneapolis or does not have children age 5 or younger. MPS ECE plans to gather additional surveys in June and July 2015 to be combined with these data and reported in a future report.

The limitation of these data is that the responses are not representative of all community members, just those that had access to the survey via community events and partners. Readers should consider the relative ranking of items rather than the percentages.

Data related to the family and parenting educational needs are reported herein, and additional results will be reported in a future report.

Despite these limitations, the race and ethnicity breakdown of respondents does mirror that of Minneapolis' population under age 5, though respondents do overrepresent Zone 2 (Figure 1). Half of respondents were from Zone 2, compared to just 27 percent of the population under age 5. MPS ECE staff will focus additional data collection in Zones 1 and 3.

1. Description of parent survey respondents compared to the population under age 5

Description of parents/caregivers responding to survey	Number	Percent	Comparison to population under age 5
Race / ethnicity			
White (non-Hispanic)	97	43%	38%
Hispanic	64	28%	20%
Black / African American	42	19%	25%*
African	17	8%	
Asian	10	4%	5%
American Indian	8	4%	2%
Other (two or more for the comparison data)	2	1%	11%
Zone representation (based on zip code)			
Zone 1 (North)	61	27%	37%
Zone 2 (Southeast)	124	54%	26%
Zone 3 (Southwest)	45	20%	37%

** U.S. Census Bureau data does not breakdown African-American and African race.*

2. Additional description of parent survey respondents

	Number	Percent
Gender		
Female	180	80%
Male	46	20%
Working		
Full time	91	41%
Part time	56	25%
Not working for pay	76	34%

	Mean	Median	Range
Age of parent	34	35	18 – 57
Number of children	2.2	2.0	1 – 7

2. Additional description of parent survey respondents (continued)

	Primary language spoken at home		Language survey was completed in		Languages spoken in Minneapolis [2]
English [1]	164	71%	179	78%	81%
Spanish	58	25%	38	17%	6%
Somali	24	10%	13	6%	Up to 5%
Oromo / Amharic	3	1%	Not applicable – the survey was not translated into these languages.		
Hmong	3	1%			Up to 4%
Other	1	<1%			Up to 3%

[1] Translating the survey into the Oromo language proved challenging, as such Oromo-speaking Early Childhood Screening staff completed the survey with Oromo speaking residents on an English version of the form. Additionally, other language competent Early Childhood Screening staff completed the survey in other languages on an English version of the form.

[2] Minneapolis households, 2013 American Community Survey 1-year estimates. U.S. Census does not breakdown Somali, Oromo, Amharic, or Hmong languages.

Parent focus groups

Parent focus groups will be conducted in the fall of 2015 to further explore the service needs and gaps of underserved populations, particularly the Hispanic and African immigrant populations who make up an increasingly larger proportion of Minneapolis' population. Results will be reported in a future report.

New and underserved populations

Over 27,000 children under age 5 live in Minneapolis. Children under age 5 make up about 7 percent of the City's total population. Overall, Minneapolis' youngest children are primarily white (non-Hispanic), black, or Hispanic, though 11 percent of all children under age 5 are multi-racial. As noted in Figure 2 above, about 9 percent of households in Minneapolis primarily speak non-English languages at home.

There are some differences by zone. A third (34%) of young children in Zone 1 (North Minneapolis) are black, and one quarter (27%) are white (non-Hispanic; figure 3). In Zone 2, over a third are white (37%), and a quarter are black or Hispanic (23-24%). In Zone 3 (southwest Minneapolis), about half (49%) of children under 5 are white, and one quarter (24%) are Hispanic.

While only 3 percent of children under age 6 living in Minneapolis were born abroad, according to birth record data, a third (32%) of all Minneapolis mothers who gave birth from 2009-2013 were foreign-born,[1] indicating that a third of young children in Minneapolis are likely first generation immigrants. These foreign-born mothers primarily identified as black (39%) or unknown race (33%).

3. Age and race of children under age 5 living in Minneapolis, by zone

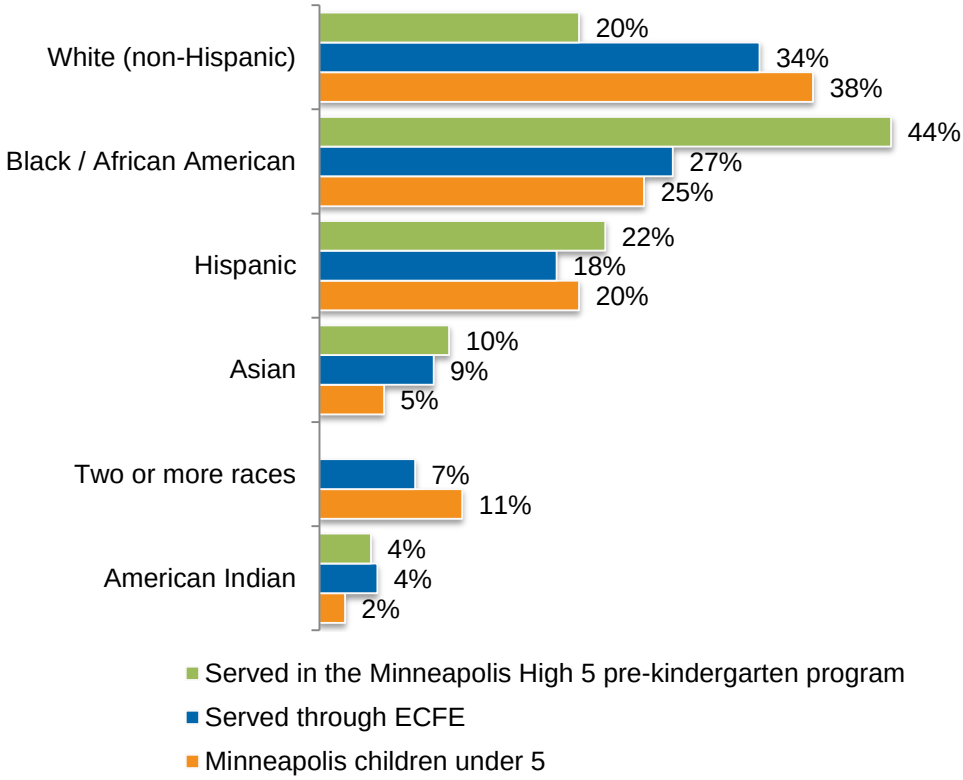
Indicator	Zone 1 (North)	Zone 2 (Southeast)	Zone 3 (Southwest)	Total
Total children under 5	10,022	7,224	9,996	27,242
Race/ethnicity of children under age 5				
White (non-Hispanic)	27%	37%	49%	38%
Black / African American	34%	23%	16%	25%
Hispanic	13%	24%	24%	20%
Two or more races	13%	11%	9%	11%
Asian	12%	2%	<1%	5%
American Indian	1%	4%	1%	2%
Children under age 6 foreign-born	3%	2%	3%	3%

Source: *2009-2013 Five-year American Community Survey, margin of error 3% or less. Race categories are inclusive of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity - as such, totals across all groups will sum to more than 100%*

[1] Birth record data on only mothers is presented, as data about fathers is less accurate.

The race / ethnicity of those served through Minneapolis ECFE well matches that of the five and under population in Minneapolis, whereas the High 5 pre-kindergarten program is serving a higher proportion of children of color than reside in Minneapolis, as it targets children who are low-income or high-risk.

4. Race of children under age 5 living in Minneapolis compared with those served in ECFE and High 5



Community partners were asked which populations and neighborhoods within the city are not being reached by current early childhood offerings. Their perception is that the following populations are underserved:

- East African immigrants, including Oromo and Somali, who are concentrated in the Cedar Riverside neighborhoods
- Homeless and highly mobile
- Hmong immigrants
- Phillips and Powderhorn neighborhoods
- North Minneapolis

Child and family risk factors

About 40 percent of children under age 5 are living in single parent households (Figure 5). About 7 percent are living with grandparents. Young children in North Minneapolis (Zone 1) were more likely to be living in single parent households or living with grandparents. Among children under age 6, 38 percent are living in dual income households, 54 percent have one parent working, and 10 percent are living in households where no parents are working. In addition, over a quarter (28%) of these children are living in poverty.

Southwest Minneapolis (Zone 3) has a higher rate of dual income households (43%), as well as the highest rate of families at or above 185 percent of the federal poverty level (66%). North and Southeast Minneapolis (Zones 1 and 2) have higher rates of households with no parents working. Similarly, North Minneapolis has the highest rate of households with young children living in poverty, with 37 percent living below the poverty level and 21 percent between 100-185 percent of the poverty level.

5. Household characteristics of children under age 6 living in Minneapolis

Indicator	Zone 1 (North)	Zone 2 (Southeast)	Zone 3 (Southwest)	Total
Children under age 5 by household type				
Living in married couple household	51%	64%	67%	61%
Living in single parent household – female householder	38%	28%	23%	30%
Living in single parent household – male householder	11%	8%	10%	10%
Children under age 5				
Living with grandparent	11%	6%	4%	7%
Children under age 6 by parents' working status				
Living with both parents, both parents in labor force	31%	40%	43%	38%
Living with both parents, one parent in labor force	14%	19%	21%	18%
Living with one parent, parent in labor force	43%	33%	33%	36%
Living with one or both parents - neither parent in labor force	14%	12%	6%	10%
Children under age 6 living in poverty				
Below 100% of poverty level	37%	27%	21%	28%
Between 100-185% of poverty level	21%	19%	14%	18%
At or above 185% of poverty level	42%	53%	66%	54%

One quarter of children age one through four have moved in the last year (Figure 6), with mobility rates slightly higher in North and Southeast Minneapolis (zones 1 and 2).

Almost all (94%) children under age 6 are insured.

6. Mobility and insurance coverage of children under age 6

Indicator	Zone 1 (North)	Zone 2 (Southeast)	Zone 3 (Southwest)	Total
Children age 1-4, moved within last year	25%	26%	20%	24%
Children under age 6 insured	96%	93%	94%	94%

Sources: *2009-2013 Five-year American Community Survey, margin of error 6% or less. Hennepin County SHAPE Survey, 2010, margin of error less than 7%.*

In addition to the characteristics of the households the youngest children live in, birth record data provide a perspective on the type of environment babies are born into. From 2009-2013, a fifth of (22%) of mothers giving birth had less than a high school diploma (about 1,300 babies a year), and another fifth had a high school diploma, but no college experience (Figure 7). Without postsecondary education, these mothers have more limited employment opportunities than those with higher levels of education, potentially limiting their ability to support their children. In addition, 44 percent of all Minneapolis mothers giving birth from 2009-2013 were un-married, and 19 percent had no father listed on the birth certificate. Finally, during that same 5-year period, about 2,000 babies were born to teen mothers (average of 400 per year).

7. Characteristics of Minneapolis mothers giving birth 2009-2013

Indicator	Total
Education	
Less than high school	22%
High school diploma or GED	20%
Some college or associate degree	18%
Bachelors	21%
Masters	19%
Age	
Under 18	2%
18 – 19	5%
20 – 24	17%
25 – 29	26%
30 – 39	46%
40 or older	4%

Sources: *Minnesota Department of Health, Birth Records.*

Family and parenting education needs in the community

Preschool, child care, community centers and library use

A myriad of preschool, child care, and educational programming exists for young children in Minneapolis, and early childhood educational experiences help prepare children for kindergarten. Despite that, about half of young children are not in school. According to the American Community Survey, over half (52%) of preschool-age children (ages 3 and 4) are not enrolled in school. The Hennepin County SHAPE survey found that 51 percent of children under age 6 (who are not in kindergarten) are not in nursery or preschool, and a third (30%) are neither in school nor receiving child care for at least 10 hours per week (Figure 8).

Preschool attendance is particularly low in southeast Minneapolis (Zone 2). While this area does have the fewest number of children under age 6 (see Figure 3), MPS ECE staff noted it is typically an underserved area, as supported by these data.

8. Preschool and child care attendance

Indicator	Zone 1 (North)	Zone 2 (Southeast)	Zone 3 (Southwest)	Total
Preschool children (age 3 and 4)	3,806	2,693	3,698	10,197
Percent enrolled in school	44%	35%	61%	48%

Attends school or child care, under age 6	Among all children under 6	Among children under 6 who are not in kindergarten
Child does not attend school	45%	51%
Attends nursery school or preschool program	42%	49%
Attends kindergarten	11%	NA
Receives child care for at least 10 hours per week from someone not related to him/her	48%	NA
Does not attend school OR child care (no formal early childhood educational experiences)	30%	NA

Sources: *2009-2013 Five-year American Community Survey, margin of error 6% or less. Hennepin County SHAPE Survey, 2010, margin of error less than 7%.*

Community centers and libraries also offer educational and recreational opportunities for young children to learn and grow developmentally. In Minneapolis, most (81%) young children are not utilizing community centers, YMCA, or the Boys' and Girls' Club (Figure 9). Though most young children (62%) are being exposed to the library, few (13%) are doing so on a weekly basis.

9. Use of community resources

Used in past month	Not used	1 time	2-3 times	4+ times
Community center, YMCA, Boys' or Girls' Club	81%	5%	6%	9%
Library or bookmobile	38%	21%	28%	13%

Source: Hennepin County SHAPE Survey, 2010, margin of error less than 7%.

Minneapolis Public Schools' High 5 pre-kindergarten program will serve about 1,160 4 year-old children in the fall of 2015. High 5 classes are placed in schools with a student population in which 50 percent or more qualify for free or reduced lunch. High 5 program priority admission goes to children who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, are English language learners, are homeless, have special education needs, or have factors that put them at risk for health, developmental or learning delays. High 5 sites are located at schools throughout MPS with the highest concentration of programs in North Minneapolis (Zone 1).

Sources of parenting information

Respondents of the parent survey overwhelmingly rely on friends, family, and coworkers for information about parenting (Figure 10). Half also noted turning to health professionals or the internet for parenting advice. A third look to parenting books or magazines, their child's child care provider or pre school staff for parenting information, or attend parenting classes.

10. Who parents go to for parenting information

Who do you go to for information about parenting? (N=228)	Number	Percent
Family, friends, coworkers	183	80%
My child's doctor or health professional	123	54%
Internet sites / blogs	111	49%
Parenting books / magazines	83	36%
My child's child care provider or preschool teacher	76	33%
School staff	75	33%
Parenting classes	71	31%
Parent support groups	26	11%

10. Who parents go to for parenting information (continued)

Who do you go to for information about parenting? (N=228)	Number	Percent
Case worker / social workers	23	10%
Therapist or mental health professional	18	8%
None, I do not seek information about parenting	10	4%
Other (Father Project, Tayo Day Care, NAZ, nanny)	5	2%

Close-ended question; multiple responses options possible, so totals do not equal 100%.

Similar to the results on sources of parenting information, respondents noted websites and blogs, and word-of-mouth from friends or family as the two best ways to receive information about activities and resources for their family (Figure 11). Half rely on electronic communication to get information about activities and resources for their family via websites, blogs, email or social media. Overall, results were varied enough that MPS ECE should consider communicating in a variety of ways to ensure resources are reaching everyone regardless of their preferred method.

11. The best method for communicating with parents

What is the best way for you to get information about activities and resources for your family? (N=229)	Number	Percent
Websites / blogs	124	54%
Word-of-mouth	112	49%
Email	108	47%
Posted flyers	96	42%
Social media	89	39%
Text messages	74	32%
Mailed flyers/postcards	73	32%
Television	52	23%
Newspaper	46	20%
Radio	40	18%
Other (CRCS, common sense, NAZ, Parent Educator)	6	3%

Close-ended question; multiple responses options possible, so totals do not equal 100%.

Preferred types, settings, and scheduling for education, classes and activities

Respondents lacked agreement about what types of parent education in which they would be likely to use (Figure 12). Over a third preferred weekly or one-time activities for parents and children, similar to the current ECFE model. Thirty percent preferred monthly classes with just parents. A fifth felt that parenting education in tandem with other activities would work best. While ethnically-specific activities, online classes and resources, and home visiting were noted by the fewest proportion of respondents, these educational formats may warrant more exploration in terms of reaching population groups not typically reached through ECFE.

Generally, parents who have participated in ECFE in the past were more likely to express interest in any type of parenting education, and those who have not participated in ECFE before were more likely to say, "None, I am not interested in parenting education." The relative preference ranking was similar for both groups, with weekly classes, one-time activities for parents and children, and monthly classes for parents.

12. Types of parenting education respondents are likely to participate

In which of the following types of parenting education would you be likely to participate?	All respondents N=222	HAVE participated in ECFE N=92	Have NOT participated in ECFE N=130
Weekly classes for parents and children	37%	47%	29%
One-time activities for parents and children	34%	40%	29%
Monthly classes for parents only	30%	41%	21%
Activities or classes in tandem with other activities my family is involved in (e.g., child care, medical appointments, shopping)	21%	29%	15%
Online classes, videos or resources	17%	20%	15%
Activities or classes with other parents and families that share my ethnicity background	17%	20%	15%
One-time activities for parents only	17%	25%	11%
Home visiting	14%	15%	13%
Other (mail, parent support group on specific topic, Way to Grow)	2%	1%	2%
None	16%	8%	22%

Close-ended question; multiple responses options possible, so totals do not equal 100%.

More than half of respondents reported that schools, the park, and the library were the best places for their family to attend classes or activities (Figure 13). Community centers were noted by 41 percent of respondents. While a quarter or less said their home, child care center, or place of worship was the best place for activities, these locations may warrant more exploration in terms of reaching population groups not typically reached through ECFE.

While parents who have participated in ECFE in the past generally favored schools as a good place for their family to attend classes or activities, parents who have not participated in ECFE before were more likely to say the park or the library. This may be in part due to the fact that ECFE is traditionally held in schools, so previous ECFE participants are accustomed to going to schools. Previous ECFE participants also chose community centers, child care centers, and places of worship more frequently.

Though only 14 percent indicated they were interested in home visiting, 27 percent indicated interest in activities at their home. Perhaps there is some stigma or discomfort related to home visiting or parents may be interested in activities they can do on their own in their home rather than having someone come into their home.

13. Places families like to attend activities or classes

Where is the best place for your family to attend activities or classes? (N=207)	All respondents N=207	HAVE participated in ECFE N=92	Have NOT participated in ECFE N=119
Schools	62%	73%	55%
The Park	58%	56%	60%
The library	55%	53%	56%
Community centers	41%	51%	34%
At home	27%	28%	25%
Child Care Center	24%	36%	15%
Place of worship (e.g., church or temple)	16%	23%	11%
Workplace	6%	11%	2%
Hospital / clinic	5%	11%	1%
Other (NAZ, Shelter)	2%	5%	1%

Close-ended question; multiple responses options possible, so totals do not equal 100%.

Respondents noted a lot of variation in days and times as the best time to attend classes or activities (Figure 14). Of particular note, Saturday mornings were the most popular time, selected by one quarter of respondents were interested in Saturday mornings. Sundays, currently not a time ECFE classes are offered, were selected as often as weekdays. These

results indicate that offering as much variety as possible may be the best strategy, as no one day or time is overwhelmingly better than another.

14. Days and times to hold activities

Which days and times work best for your family to attend classes or activities? (N=217)	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday	18%	14%	16%
Tuesday	15%	13%	17%
Wednesday	14%	15%	**20%**
Thursday	15%	13%	18%
Friday	15%	12%	15%
Saturday	**25%**	**20%**	9%
Sunday	16%	14%	8%
None		20%	

ECFE participation and barriers

About 41 percent of respondents had participated in ECFE in the past (Figure 15). Respondents generally had many reasons for participating in ECFE, though child-related reasons ranked highest, particularly friendship and socialization for their child, followed by time with their child, and educational activities for their child. Reasons related to parenting education and parenting support ranked slightly lower. This mirrors ECFE staff experience that parents "come for their child and stay for themselves."

15. Reasons for participating in ECFE

ECFE participation	Number	Percent
Participated in ECFE	92	41%
Reasons for participating in ECFE (of those who participated)		
Friendship and socialization for my child	64	70%
Time with my child	58	63%
Educational activities for my child	56	62%
Helpful information about parenting	54	59%
Discussion/support from other parents	50	55%
Friendship for myself	28	31%
Knew someone else in the class	21	23%
Other	6	7%

Close-ended question; multiple responses options possible, so totals do not equal 100%.

Over half (59%) of respondents had not participated in ECFE in the past (Figure 16). Their reasons for not participating varied. Scheduling and involvement in other activities were the top two reasons. About one-fifth of respondents were not interested or didn't know about it. Issues related to the location (e.g., transportation, unsafe or uncomfortable locations, and difficulty getting to the location) and cultural relevance did not seem to be a factor for these respondents.

16. Reasons for not participating in ECFE

ECFE participation	Number	Percent
Did not participate in ECFE	134	59%
Reasons for not participating in ECFE (of those who have not participated)		
The schedule or class times	35	37%
Involved in other activities	27	29%
Not interested in parenting classes	17	18%
Didn't know about it	16	17%
Too expensive	8	9%
Not offered in my neighborhood	6*	6%
No transportation to classes	5	5%
Locations difficult to get to	4	4%
Did not know anyone else in class	4	4%
Locations are unsafe or uncomfortable	1	1%
Registration too difficult	0	0%
Not culturally relevant	0	0%
Not offered in my preferred language	0	0%
Other (don't qualify, had a baby, child too young, forgot about it, already have training, not offered in summer)	11	12%

Close-ended question; multiple responses options possible, so totals do not equal 100%.

** These six were all from different zip codes, but all in Zones 1 or 2.*

Preliminary recommendations

These recommendations are based on the preliminary findings and will be refined and confirmed, as appropriate, once final data collection concludes in July 2015.

- **Consider alternative communication methods and messaging**. Respondents noted friends and family, health care professionals, and digital media as main sources and methods for obtaining information about parenting and resources. Though mailed material was a source of information for a third of respondents, it is an expensive communication strategy and may not be reaching many Minneapolis parents with young children. In addition, about a fifth of respondents were not interested in parenting classes, indicating MPS ECE may wish to explore alternative messages that highlight the family interaction aspect, or better highlight the benefits for themselves and their child.

- **Offer a variety of educational opportunities to meet everyone's preference**. Given that scheduling and time was the number one listed barrier to ECFE participation, and respondents were interested in a wide variety of educational formats, locations, and schedules, MPS ECE should do whatever it can, within its limited resources, to offer variety in its educational offerings. Though the traditional ECFE format (weekly classes with parents and children within the school setting) ranked high, other formats and settings should be explored given overall interest. For example, a shorter series of classes on weekends held at the library or a community center may appeal to families who are not currently being reached. In addition, maintain or increase weekend options for those who work weekdays.

- **Continue to reach out to immigrant populations**. MPS ECE has made efforts to reach immigrant populations in recent years by offering classes and activities in other languages and hiring diverse, bilingual staff. Community partners perceived the need for additional educational opportunities for these communities. MPS ECE should continue these efforts to reach immigrant populations.

- **Expand early childhood opportunities within Zone 2**. Community partners noted the need for additional programming in the Phillips and Powderhorn neighborhoods. In addition, while the Zone 2 has the fewest number of children relative to the other areas of the city, a small proportion of children are engaged in preschool programming. MPS ECE should continue its efforts to expand High 5 programming into Zone 2 to obtain more geographic balance.