

MN KIDS EXPLORER

**NOURISHING
OUR CHILDREN
FOR SUCCESS**

m1 MINNESOTA
EARLY CHILDHOOD
LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM

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WELCOME!

<http://eclids.mn.gov/#/ds2>

Nourishing Our Children for Success will lead you on an exploration of early childhood services across the state and the children who participate in them.

This easy-to-navigate data story offers you context to data currently available from the Minnesota Departments of Education, Health, and Human Services that are included in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System. Throughout the story you will access powerful data visualizations of statewide, district, county, and legislative district data for some of the early care and learning programs available in Minnesota, for your own exploration.

Enjoy.



CHAPTER 1

VALUE OF EARLY EDUCATION

All Minnesota children should have access to a system of high-quality early care and education programs. Children who are healthy and successful socially, emotionally, and academically have a better chance of becoming economically productive and engaged adult citizens.

Children who attend programs that are inclusive of peers with different abilities, cultural backgrounds, and a range of economic backgrounds benefit from a variety of language models, increased respect for diversity, and preparation for life in an inclusive society.¹

In Minnesota, young children have the opportunity to start building their learning skills in preparation for kindergarten and overall school success through various state programs that promote school readiness. Some of these programs have been designed to meet the specific developmental needs of children in poverty and help their families provide a healthier environment for them. Children with high needs² who participate in well-designed early childhood programs are likelier to be ready for kindergarten and further succeed in their educational pathways.

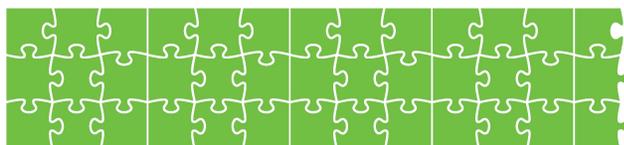
The purpose of Nourishing Our Children for Success is to provide community leaders easy-to-access, meaningful data about early childhood in order to make informed decisions.

SUPPORTS IN PLACE

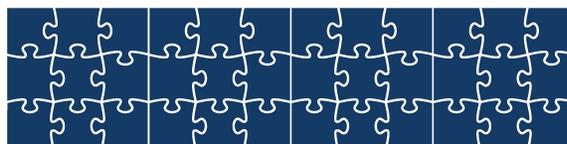
Minnesota values supporting young children through publicly-funded programs and services so that they are at their optimal health and ready to learn. Some examples include Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening (ECS), the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs), and the Kindergarten Entry Profile (KEP). Each of these initiatives provides guidance and early identification of child needs. Although data from each of these programs are not yet included in the ECLDS, they constitute important foundations for other services and programs.

EARLY CHILDHOOD SCREENING KINDERGARTEN COHORT, 2018-19³

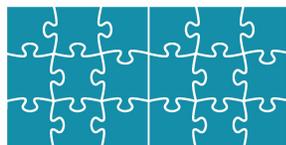
41.1%
Age 3



40.3%
Age 4



18.1%
Age 5



.5%
After Age 5



Notes:

- Kindergarten cohort report reflects selected state fiscal year and looks back to determine age at which children were screened.
- Children served through Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) may be screened within ECSE.
- Children may be screened multiple times within a year, based on parent request.
- Data reflects children enrolled in public schools only; does not include children screened who attend private schools.
- Kindergartners attending charter schools not required to receive screening, unless the charter elects to provide a program, Minnesota Statutes 121A.16.
- Represents only screenings completed by Head Start or Child and Teen Checkups and submitted to districts.

Minnesota children receive a free early childhood screening by their school district prior to entering public kindergarten⁴.

Through the Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening program (ECS), children must receive a free early childhood screening between age 3 and no later than 30 days after entering public kindergarten or within 90 days to attend other early learning programs. The screening requirement may be met by completing a comparable screening through a school district, Head Start, Child and Teen Checkups, or a health care provider. Screening is a simple process that measures a child’s developmental status, and a child may be referred for a more in-depth health assessment, diagnostic assessment, or educational evaluation as a result of ECS.

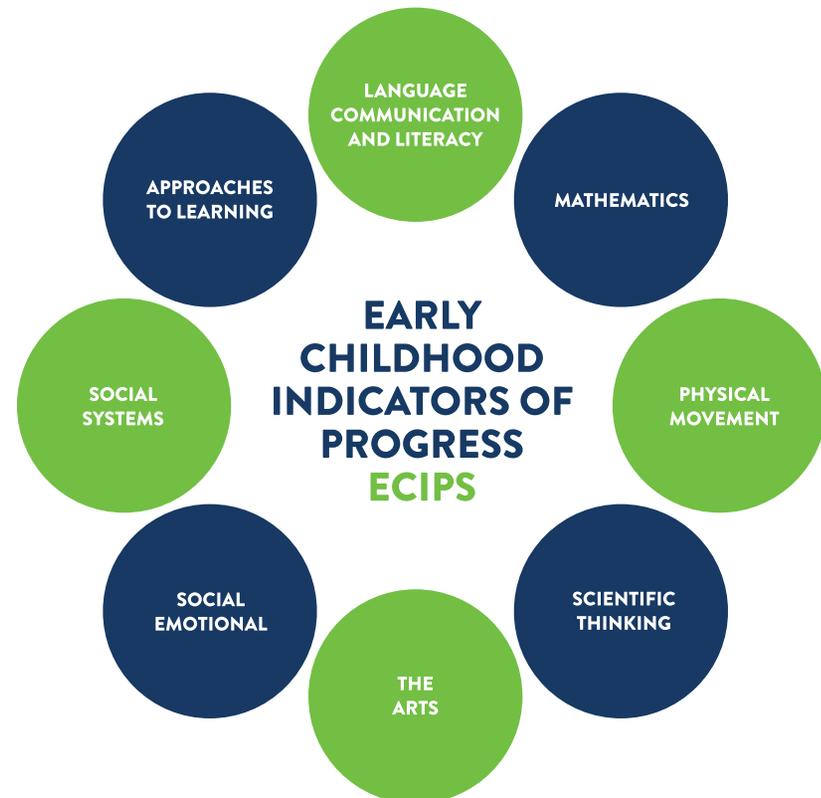
Children and their families may also be referred to free early learning opportunities and resources, such as Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), Head Start, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), prekindergarten programs, early learning scholarships, and/or home visiting programs.

Programs and services that assess the development and learning of young children may do so in a variety of ways. Decades of research has shown that the most thorough assessments of young children address multiple areas or “domains” of learning and development. The Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs), Minnesota’s early childhood learning standards, are a common set of developmentally appropriate expectations for children age birth to kindergarten aligned with kindergarten academic standards. The ECIPs are used in all areas of the early childhood system, as well as all Minnesota programs (aligned with Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework). This provides consistency and coherence for children, families, teachers, and administrators. ECIPs parent guides (<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/early/ind/>) offer ideas for simple activities families can do to help children gain knowledge and skills.

READ MORE ABOUT ECIPS

<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/early/ind/>

In many Minnesota elementary schools, kindergarten teachers complete some form of assessment to understand the status and needs of their new students. This helps them plan effective lessons and understand the unique needs and abilities of each child. Minnesota has a Kindergarten Entry Profile (KEP) initiative that gathers data at kindergarten entry from kindergarten classrooms that volunteer to participate. In recent years, the data collected has been used to pilot the alignment of assessment tools to one another and the ECIPs. This work ensures that kindergarten teachers using these assessments with young children are measuring the same thing. The KEP data are not currently used for state-level analysis because it is voluntary and they are not representative of all kindergartners in the state.



When assessing children’s learning and development, standards must take the unique needs of dual-language learners into account. Learning two or more languages is an asset, and children need to be supported to use both their home language and English. There are many ways early educators may use ECIPs with dual language learners, including celebrating the cultural and linguistic diversity of children and their families, supporting children’s fluency in their home language or honoring home languages if staff are not proficient in that language, using best practices to teach English, establishing a culturally responsive learning environment across domains, supporting children’s language development through play and talking, and reading and singing together in both English and home languages.

KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ Children who participate in quality early care and education programs are more likely to be successful in school, graduate from high school, enroll in higher education and professional training, become productive adult citizens, and be less likely to enter the criminal justice system.
- ✓ Minnesota children may receive free health and developmental screening starting at age three to identify potential needs of children and provide supports to meet those needs.
- ✓ The Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs) can help programs serving young children ensure they are addressing all of the relevant domains of child development.
- ✓ Minnesota’s Kindergarten Entry Profile (KEP) has piloted the alignment of a variety of classroom level assessments administered within the first 8-10 weeks of the kindergarten year and aligned to the ECIPs.

¹ Proven Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions. Article on the Rand Corporation website (https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9145.html); The Current State of Scientific Knowledge on Pre-Kindergarten Effects (https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/duke_prekstudy_final_4-4-17_hires.pdf)

² Children with high needs refers to a variety of demographics, such as poverty, residing on Indian lands (reservations), having a disability or developmental delay, being an English language learner, living in a high-crime community, having an incarcerated parent, or having a parent with a disability. Center on the Developing Child (2007). Early Childhood Program Effectiveness (In brief). Retrieved from <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/>.

³Screening data is collected in the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System called (MARSS). It collects student data required by the Minnesota Department of Education.

⁴According to Minnesota Statutes 120A.20, 121A.17, 121A.15 (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/121A/pdf>): A child is eligible for kindergarten when he/she is at least 5 years old by September 1st of the child's enrollment year, has received early childhood health and developmental screening, and has received medically acceptable immunizations.



CHAPTER 2

SERVICES PROVIDED

Minnesota children and their families may participate in one or more public Early Care and Education (ECE) services designed to meet their health, educational, social, and economic needs. ECE services are explored in the coming chapters, and data from these programs help us understand the successes, challenges, and opportunities the state faces to better serve our children.

CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

CCAP helps low-income families pay for child care so that parents can work or go to school. Families are allowed to choose the child care provider that best meets their needs. These may be licensed child care centers, licensed family child care homes, licensed exempt centers (i.e., school-age programs run by schools), or legally non-licensed providers.

EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION

ECFE provides parent education for parents (including expectant parents) and their children ages birth through third grade. ECFE focuses on strengthening families by enhancing the ability of all parents to provide the best possible environment for the healthy growth and development of their children. Since all parents need information and support to raise healthy children, ECFE is a universal program, and participation is not restricted by income level or special needs. ECFE recognizes that the needs of families can vary by location and works closely with public and private community organizations to create programs and connect families with resources that serve the needs of the families in their particular district.

EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION

ECSE provides supports and services to infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities and their families. Children and families are connected to ECSE services via referral from a variety of providers, including pediatricians, school districts, child care providers, and Head Start.

MINNESOTA FAMILY INVESTMENT PROGRAM AND DIVERSIONARY WORK PROGRAM

MFIP/DWP are economic supports to low-income families. MFIP/DWP have work and work preparation requirements intended to help parents secure and retain employment. Families must be income-eligible; these families are also eligible for CCAP.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

SNAP (formerly also known as food stamps) provides families with supplemental resources to purchase food for their households. Families must be income-eligible.

SCHOOL READINESS

The School Readiness program, or “Minnesota District Prekindergarten” programs, are intended to prepare children for kindergarten. A child is eligible to participate in a school readiness program if he or she: is at least three years old on September 1; has completed health and developmental screening within 90 days of program enrollment; and either qualifies for free or reduced-price lunch, is an English learner, is homeless, has an ECSE plan, has an identified learning risk factor identified through health and developmental screening, or is at risk by school district definition.

School Readiness Plus (SRP) is a fairly new early learning program, created in the 2017 legislative session, and targeted to four-year-olds demonstrating one or more risk factors. Voluntary prekindergarten (VPK) prepares children for kindergarten success. Funding allows school districts, and charter schools with MDE-recognized early learning programs, to incorporate a VPK program into their E-12 system. A child who is four years old on September 1 is eligible to participate free of charge.

EARLY LEARNING SCHOLARSHIPS⁵

Scholarships provide funding to increase access for three- and four-year-old children with the highest needs to high-quality early childhood programs with the goal of improving their school readiness. To be eligible, a program must be rated through Parent Aware, Minnesota’s quality rating and improvement system. Children age birth to

age two are eligible if they meet any of the following criteria: child of a teen parent, currently in foster care, in need of child protective services, experienced homelessness in the last 24 months, or has a sibling awarded a scholarship and attending the same program.

READ MORE ABOUT MDE EARLY LEARNING

<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/early/>

The Minnesota Department of Education’s division of Early Learning Services supports schools, communities, and districts to implement inclusive and comprehensive prenatal through 3rd grade systems aligned with World’s Best Workforce (<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/wbwf/>). MDE’s Early Learning Services division vision is that all Minnesota children are prepared for kindergarten, proficient in 3rd grade reading, and prepared for lifelong learning. To support this vision, the following strategies are implemented by Early Learning Services:

- Enhance system of prenatal through Grade 3 leadership.
- Expand access to high-quality education, services, and instructional time for all children.
- Strengthen and align instruction, assessment, and curriculum.
- Support evidence-based practices for family and community engagement.
- Ensure a highly skilled workforce.
- Use data to inform policy, planning, practice, and professional development.



KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ Minnesota has a number of funding supports and programming options for young children and families. Some are targeted; some are an option for every child.

- ✓ The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) helps low-income families pay for child care.
- ✓ Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is a universal program that provides education for families on enhancing the environment for child healthy growth and development.
- ✓ Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) provides supports and services to young children with disabilities and their families.
- ✓ The Minnesota Family Investment Program and Diversionary Work Program (MFIP/DWP) provides economic support to help parents secure and retain employment.
- ✓ The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides supplemental resources for low-income families to purchase food.
- ✓ School Readiness is a district-implemented preschool program for children with specific needs.
- ✓ Early Learning Scholarships increase access to high-quality Parent Aware-rated programs statewide for children with the highest needs.

⁵ For those interested in learning more about Early Learning Scholarships in their area, visit the Early Learning Scholarships page (<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/early/sch/index.htm>) on the Minnesota Department of Education website.

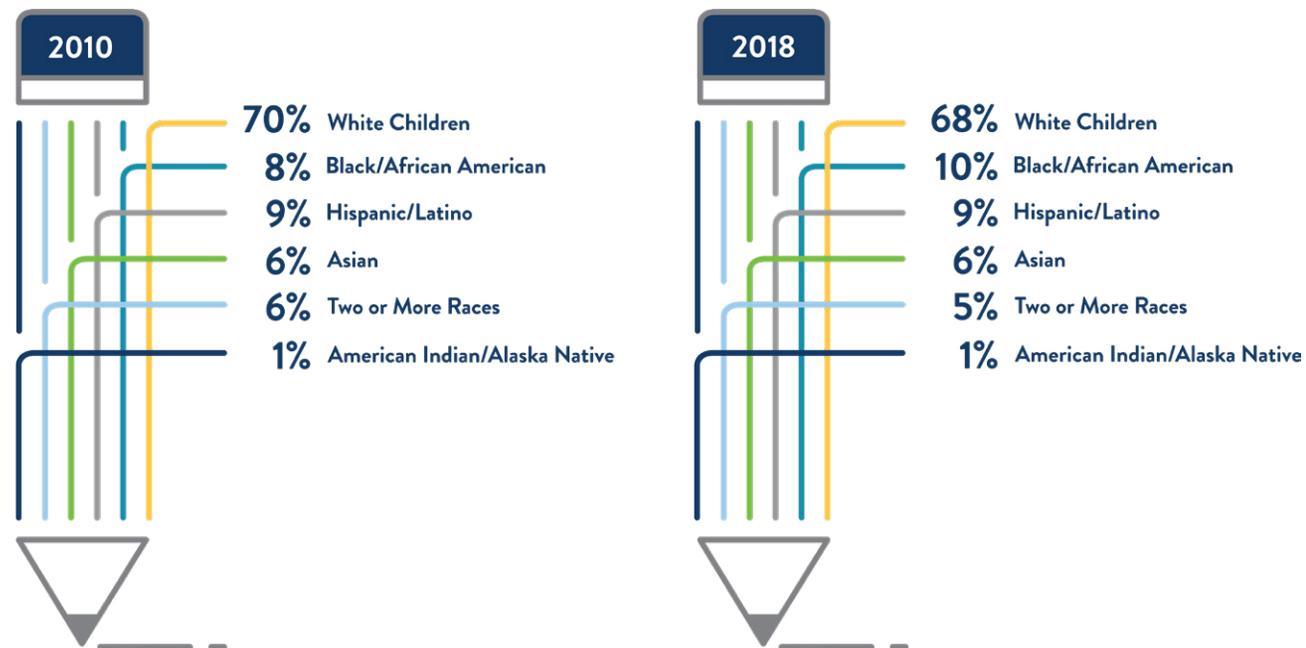


CHAPTER 3

THE KIDS WE SERVE

Minnesota's young children are diverse, and diversity has been increasing over time. The percent of white children has decreased 2% from 2010 to 2018 while the proportion of children of color has been on the rise. Since 2010, the proportion of Black children grew by 2%, and children of two or more races by 1%.

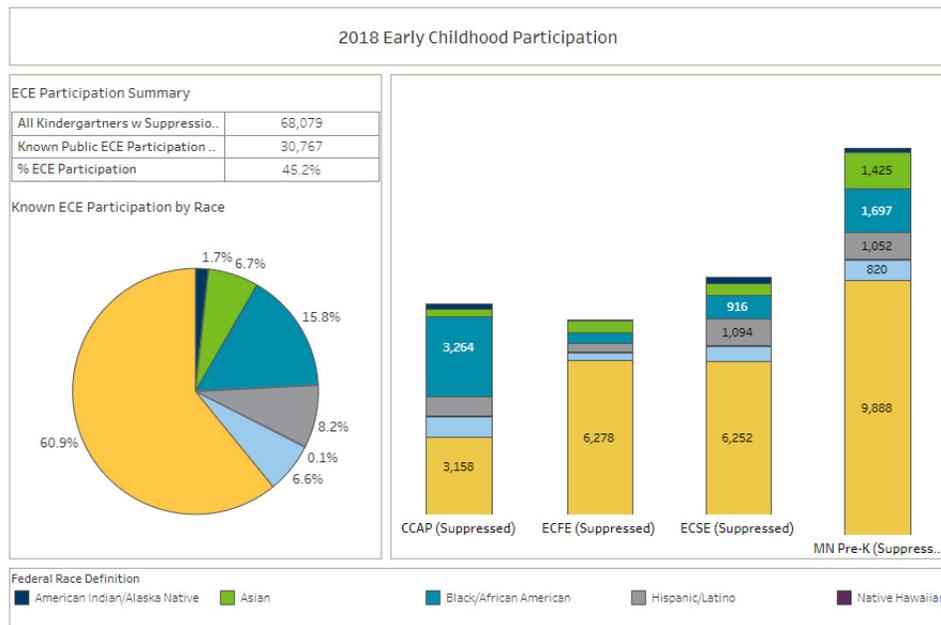
SLIGHTLY MORE MINNESOTA CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO AGE 5 WERE CHILDREN OF COLOR IN 2018 COMPARED TO 2010

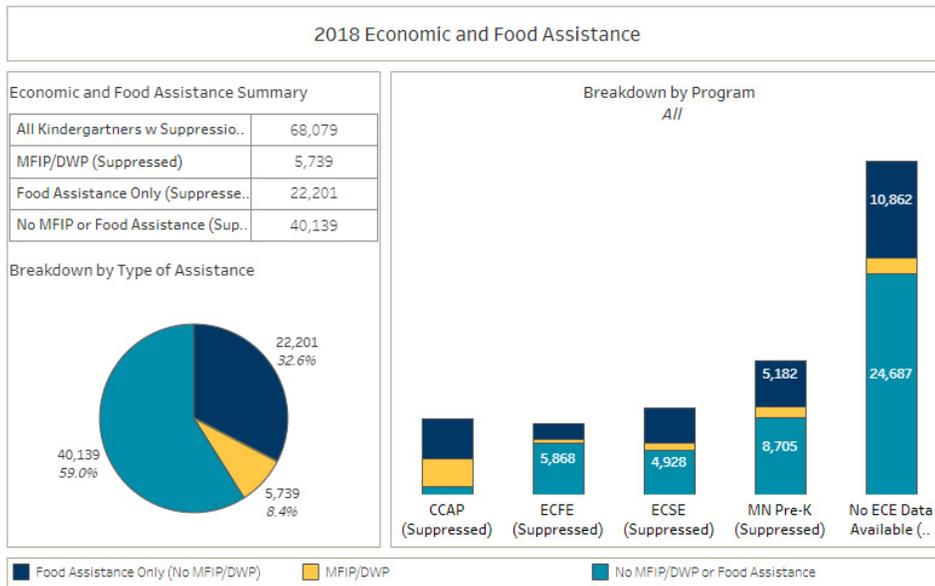


Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Understanding the demographics of children who are served by ECE programs is essential for improving services, adapting them to the needs of the community, and better designing outreach programs to fully serve those children who need them the most.

Explore the following dashboards to discover how Minnesota children are benefiting from ECE services in your county, school district, or legislative district (<https://www.gis.leg.mn/iMaps/districts/>).





KEY FINDINGS

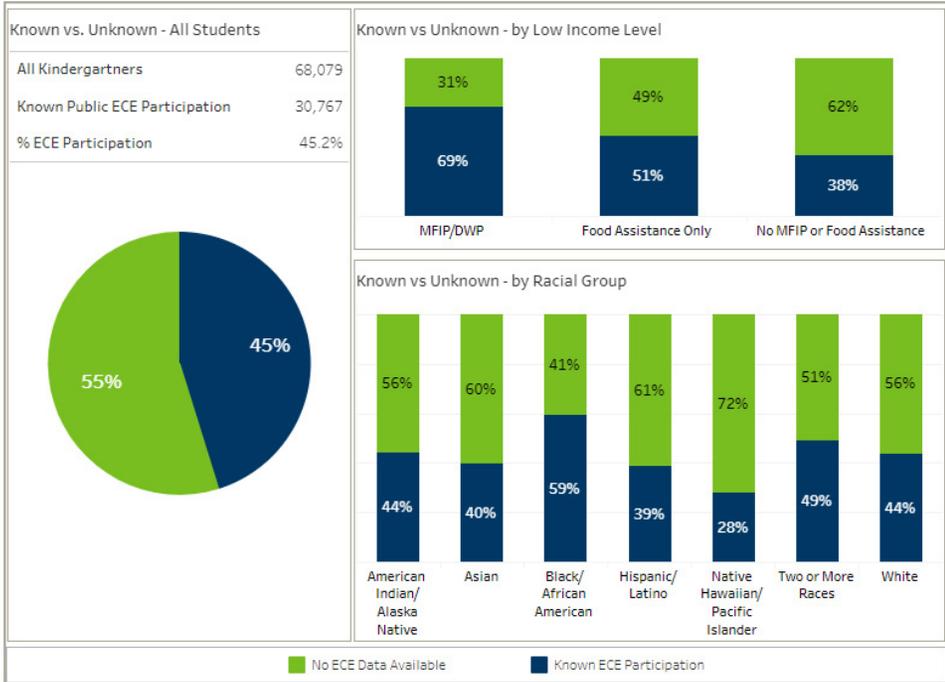
- ✓ Depending on their design, ECE programs serve children from low-income families or the universal population.
- ✓ CCAP serves primarily children of color. Statewide, many more Black/African American children are being served compared to other children of color.
- ✓ ECFE serves an increasingly diverse population, approximating the population at the state level for a universal program.
- ✓ ECSE may identify more children of color than those who are served. Parents have a choice and may decline services.



CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPATION

This chapter is dedicated to exploring Minnesota children’s participation in ECE programs. As described in Chapter 1, research shows a significant return on investment for communities when children are able to participate in high-quality early care and education. Not all young children are able to participate in high-quality programs due to a variety of factors: lack of expansion funding, shortage of trained staff and low wages, and geographic mismatches between where families need care and where it exists.



With the exception of ECSE, all the early childhood programs could serve more families and children if more funding were made available. In this context, understanding how children are accessing ECE programs is relevant for allocating funds.

The following dashboard will allow you to discover how Minnesota children are participating in ECE services in your county, school district, or legislative district (<https://www.gis.leg.mn/iMaps/districts/>).

KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ Statewide, children from low-income families are participating in public ECE programs at high rates.
- ✓ Increased state investment in recent years in CCAP, Early Learning Scholarships, Head Start, VPK, ECSE, and SRP have had a positive impact on increasing participation of low-income children and children of color. Significant additional investment is necessary to reach all eligible populations early.

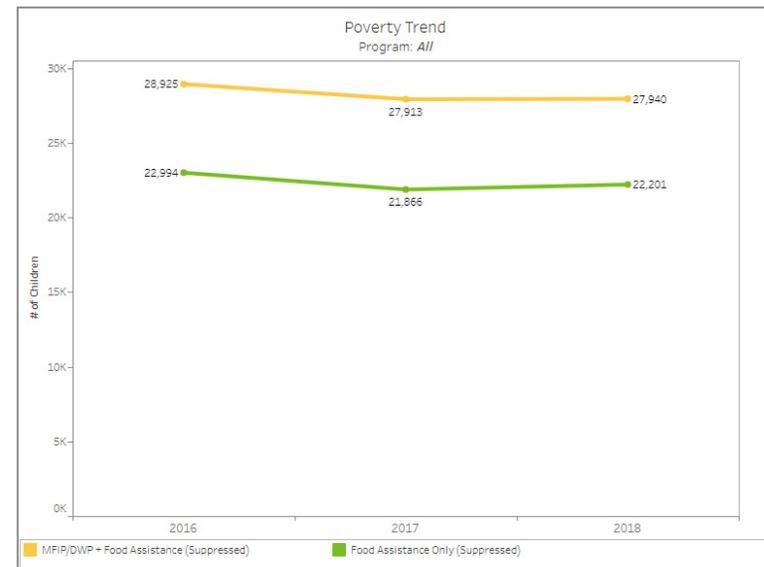
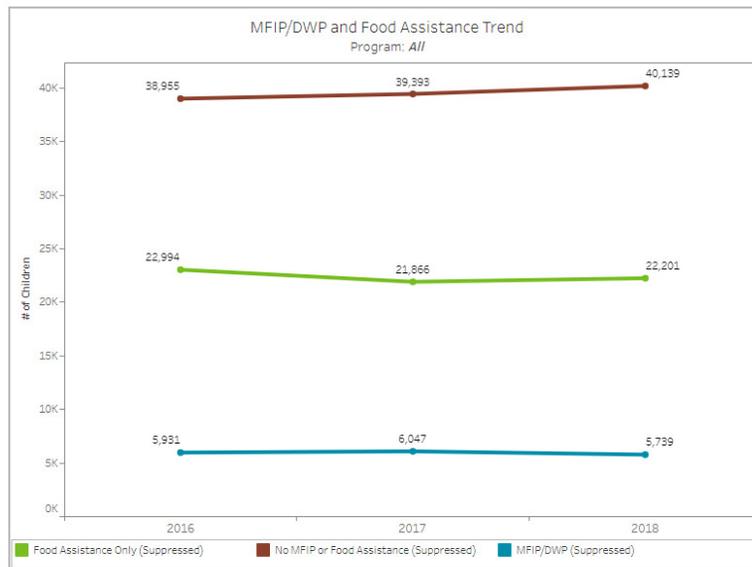


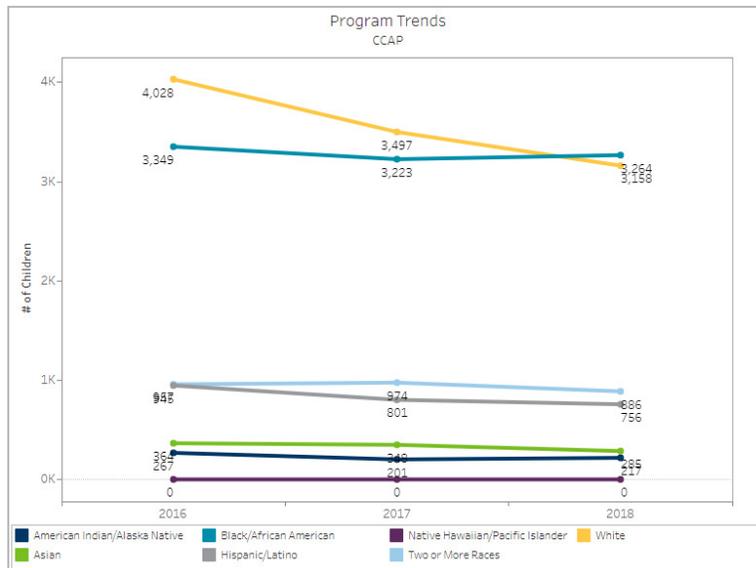
CHAPTER 5

TRENDS

This chapter is dedicated to exploring participation trends of Minnesota children in ECE programs by poverty and race. Participation trend data can be used to forecast changes in the demand for specific programs in the future, or to learn how children and families are accessing multiple programs over several years.

Poverty and race participation trends also illustrate how programs complement one another in practice, or how staff might adjust their outreach to better serve children of a specific demographic.





The following dashboard will allow you to discover the ECE participation trends by poverty and race in your county, school district, or legislative district (<https://www.gis.leg.mn/iMaps/districts/>). In The Value of Early Learning, MFIP/DWP and Food Assistance are used as a proxy for understanding lower socioeconomic status.

Note: The increased participation rate of children of color and the increase in known participation in ECE programs across all races and ethnicities may be partly attributed to increased collection of data for ECFE and District Preschool.

KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ Kindergartener participation in MFIP and SNAP has remained relatively stable from 2013 to 2018.
- ✓ Only about 1/3 of ECFE participants receive income or food assistance whereas about 1/2 of families participating in ECSE receive cash or food assistance.
- ✓ The largest increase in participation was observed amongst kindergarteners whose families received no cash or food assistance because it is a universal program open to all families.
- ✓ ECFE tends to attract families that are less likely to access MFIP and SNAP.



CHAPTER 6

OPPORTUNITIES

The youngest Minnesotans are increasingly diverse. The ever-changing face of Minnesota children means that the state’s programs, policies, and investments must adapt in order to address their needs to ensure school readiness and well-being. Strategies to continue current progress include targeted outreach and investment, cultural integration to programs and curriculum, and an increase in program and policy leaders and educators from communities of color.

2017–2019 ECE PARTICIPATION SUMMARY



Recent investments in programs and policies targeted at increasing early education program access for low-income children like CCAP, Head Start, VPK, SRP, and Early Learning Scholarships, have successfully increased access for children of color. Additional targeted investments in these communities would continue to improve affordability and access while supporting cultural identity.

A key recommendation by the Office of Legislative Auditor is for the legislature to consider aligning funding and eligibility requirements of certain early childhood programs to make them more understandable and efficient. This change may increase access.

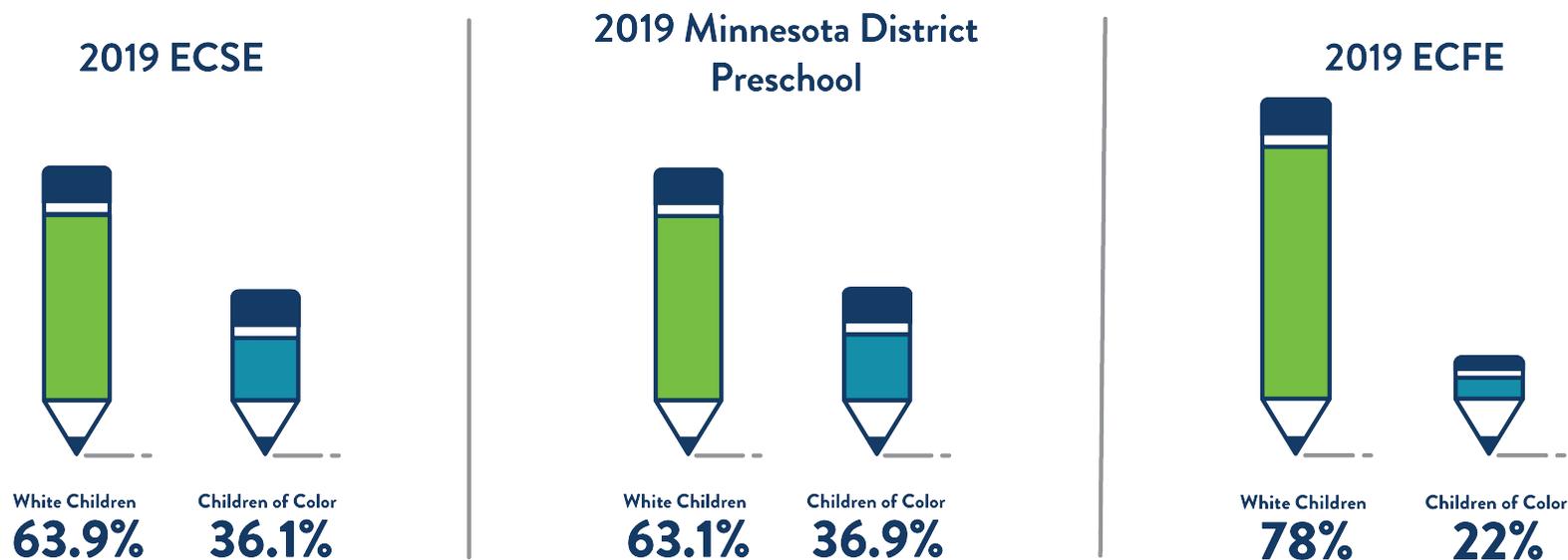
A child's culture and race are highly influential to their learning, and cultural preferences should be taken into account in instructional and family engagement practices within early childhood programming⁶. When culture is acknowledged and welcomed in a learning environment, children are more likely to thrive and their family is more likely to be engaged. As the diversity of Minnesota's children continues to grow, it is important for programs to adjust to these changing needs in learning and cultural preferences.

CCAP is successfully reaching the target populations that benefit most from access to stable, high-quality child care while parents work to improve family economic stability. This evidence demonstrates that CCAP is a key to success for many young, lower income children and children of color, and there is opportunity for expansion of services and benefits, if supported by more funding.

Statewide, children of color are underrepresented in school readiness and public parenting programs. This offers Minnesota school districts an opportunity for ongoing target outreach and increasing funds to reach more children of color and American Indian children.

Recent legislation requires ECFE programs to conduct annual community needs assessments. Among other things, these assessments must identify new and underserved populations, and programs should develop programming and services for families identified in the needs assessment. Local ECFE programs should continue to enhance efforts for reaching families that access MFIP and food programs, similar to how some ECFE programs have built outreach to other new and underserved populations.

Given the low participation rates for many populations of color and low-income children in ECSE, there is an opportunity for outreach to families in these communities whose children are likely eligible for ECSE. Providing intervention services early will decrease the likelihood of needing those services later on--a benefit to the family and child, as well as cost savings to the state.



The Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) recently recommended that the “Legislature should consider requiring assessments of school readiness as children enter kindergarten.” The Minnesota Department of Education agrees with this recommendation, though statewide implementation will require additional funding. The OLA also recommended the use of a universal identifier across all programs as well as fully funding a statewide Kindergarten Entry Profile.

⁶ Ren-Etta Sullivan, Debra. (2016). *Cultivating the Genius of Black Children: Strategies to Close the Achievement Gap in the Early Years*. Red Leaf Press: St. Paul, MN