

# **Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care Best Practices: A Report to Ready4K**

**How Culturally Diverse Families  
Teach Their Children to Succeed  
and How Early Education Systems  
Can Learn from Them**

**Betty Emarita**

**Condensed Report  
November 2006**





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## Acknowledgments

When I first began consulting in the field of early childhood education in the late 1990s, family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care was considered, by definition, to be inferior care. That perception is changing, thanks to the work on a national level of Toni Porter, Director of Institute for a Child Care Continuum, Bank Street College; Nina Sazer O'Donnell, Director of National Strategies, Success by Six, United Way of America, formerly of Family and Work Institute; Charles Bruner, Executive Director of Child and Family Policy Center; and the leadership of the Family and Work Institute in the field. In the state of Minnesota, this transformation is being sparked by the commitment of the Bush Foundation, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Minnesota Department of Education, and the pioneering work of the Greater Minneapolis Day Care Association.

Exploring FFN care best practices has given me some remarkable glimpses into different cultural communities and has helped me to better understand my own. It has been very much like exploring the rain forest. I didn't always understand what I was seeing, and it required both patience and humility to allow form and meaning to reveal themselves. It also required incredibly generous guides and coaches who helped me.

I have learned that the process of exploration itself is culturally driven and that at the level of primary inquiry an externally imposed, inflexible process can distort the very phenomenon it is

trying to reveal. Within cultural communities, organic systems, like child rearing, have their own textured ways of knowing, being, and doing. I have learned to listen and to be quiet and to sit where I am told.

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**Betty Emarita** is a strategic management consultant and president of Development and Training Resources, a firm she established in 1986. Her team of associates works with nonprofit institutions, foundations, educational institutions, government agencies, and businesses to help them absorb new information, manage change, and move concepts to action. Her firm helps clients to attain targeted outcomes in a changing economic environment with increasingly diverse populations. She and her colleagues work with organizations to design and launch bold initiatives, build inclusive environments, design curricula, conduct assessments, and develop and implement strategic plans. She infuses local action with global thinking in her national and international work.

Current and former clients include Ready 4 K (a Minnesota early education public policy organization), the Ford Foundation, the Kellogg Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foun-

dation, Children's Hospitals and Clinics, North Point Health and Wellness Center, Powderhorn Phillips Wellness Center, the Bush Foundation, the Minneapolis Foundation, the McKnight Foundation, Twin Cities LISC, Greater Twin Cities United Way, Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity, Minnesota Department of Human Services, US Department of Agriculture, US Department of Health and Human Services, Rainbow Research, Catholic Charities, Minneapolis Public Schools, Public Strategies Group, Century Community College, Tuskegee University, North Carolina Community College System, and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.

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## Introduction

The Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care Best Practices Project is an initiative of Ready 4 K, a Minnesota nonprofit organization led by president and former legislator, Todd Otis. Ready 4 K is leading efforts throughout Minnesota to promote school readiness and to make certain that all of our youngest citizens are fully prepared to succeed in kindergarten and life. With the active involvement of a broad spectrum of citizens and sectors across the state, Ready 4 K is encouraging the enactment of sound legislative policies that support systems ensuring that all children in the state of Minnesota enter kindergarten ready to learn.

This report describes the process and the results of engaging five cultural communities—African American, Hmong, Latino-Mexican-Chicano,\* the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, and Somali—in an effort to

- ▶ Inform policy and practice related to early education
- ▶ Create an early education system that works for everyone.

\*Includes North, South, and Central American, Caribbean, and Southern European cultural influences

## Why Focus on Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care?

Family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care is a new name for the most ancient and widely practiced form of child care in history. It refers to the network of relatives, close friends, and neighbors who are involved with parents in the care and education of young children. Many people have vivid memories of being cared for on a regular basis by grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. It is the most widely used form of child care in Minnesota. Used by families that are rural and urban, across all income levels, and in all racial and cultural groups, FFN care offers a remarkable opportunity to develop a shared vision for family friendly policies that support early care and education.

Many cultural communities prefer FFN care because it enables them to transfer cultural values, language, and traditions to their children. This project focuses on best practices within FFN care in five cultural communities: African American, Hmong, Latino-Mexican-Chicano, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, and Somali. It seeks to identify practices that families have used to help their children succeed. By focusing on assets rather than deficits we hope to build upon the strengths of families and communities, and create continuity in children's learning experiences as they transition from home to more formal care to kindergarten. The information in this report comes from the experiences of families whose children have done well and from the observations of community members, caregivers, and educators.

## Creating Continuity for Children

Over the life of the Family Friend and Neighbor Care Best Practices Project, our goals are to:

1. Identify best practices.
2. Align them with Minnesota's Early Learning Standards.
3. Make the information available to families, providers, parent educators, and kindergarten teachers.
4. Create systemic impact through:
  - ▶ Teacher education.
  - ▶ Professional development for child care providers and parent educators.
  - ▶ Institutional incorporation of culturally appropriate practices.
  - ▶ Family friendly policies.

This report reflects the first two goals.

Advocacy for early care and education has raised public awareness of the low proficiency performance given by children of color entering kindergarten, and its association with low income parents with lower levels of education. However, there is less awareness of the number of children of color across all income levels

who historically have performed well in school.

In each of the ethnic groups on which we focused, there were anecdotal stories of great leaps in formal educational attainment from one generation to the next. For example, in one Latino family, parents who emigrated from Mexico with few resources and less than a grade school education have grown children who have doctorates and professional degrees. These stories, while remarkable, were not unusual. They raised several questions about how these families are achieving such success:

- ▶ *What* are they teaching their children?
- ▶ *How* are they teaching their children?
- ▶ *What* can we learn from them?

We believed that if we could identify best practices among FFN caregivers in these cultural communities, perhaps we could begin to create continuity between what children are learning in these effective networks, in their more formal child care experiences, and in kindergarten.



## Impact of Culture on Minnesota's Early Learning Standards

Minnesota's Early Learning Standards focus on six domains: Social and Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, Language and Literacy Development, Creativity and the Arts, Cognitive Development, and Physical and Motor Development. These domains reflect the range of child development recommended by national guidelines. Each is divided into three to five components. Every component has indicators which describe the skill or ability children are expected to demonstrate.

The Early Learning Standards have the potential to be a unifying tool for families, child care providers, and teachers. Like most tools, the Early Learning Standards must be understood through the lens of culture. For example, in the domain Social and Emotional Development, one of the indicators is, "Demonstrates increasing competency in recognizing and describing own emotions." In some cultures, however, while it is acceptable for children to recognize their emotions, it is not acceptable for them to describe them. Or there may be very limited circumstances in which describing emotions is acceptable.

In another example, in the domain Approaches to Learning, an indicator is, "Shows eagerness to learn and a sense of wonder." A Hmong boy may express eagerness to learn by quietly observing. An African American boy may express eagerness to learn by physically interacting with the object of his curiosity. A teacher who is unaware of these differences, which can be both individual and

cultural, may think that the Hmong child is shy and withdrawn and that the African American child is disruptive and out of control.

Most families in the ethnic communities on which we focused are unaware of the Early Learning Standards. They may describe their children's abilities in very different ways. In these communities, academic skills are often embedded in social skills and demonstrated in practical tasks. For example, in some families we interviewed, girls who were four years of age were learning to wash dishes—working alongside an older sister, mother, or grandmother. The families were focused on teaching that everyone must contribute to the well-being of the family and that it is important to take pride in doing a job well. However, in the process, the child was learning pre-numeracy and pre-literacy skills as well. The dishes were washed in a particular sequence that involved number and size. The child sometimes had to match patterns and recognize different types of dishwashing products by shape, size, color, or label.

In Minnesota, over 97% of kindergarten teachers are Euro-American. Most of them have not been exposed to the ways in which culture affects how the Early Learning Standards might be expressed.

Moreover, most families in these ethnic communities did not know that embedded within the complex social skills they are teaching their children are many of the skills that children are expected to demonstrate when they enter kindergarten. As a result, they cannot communicate this information to kindergarten teachers, and opportunities for continuity are often lost.

## Learning from Families: How Best Practices Were Identified

An advisory council was formed to guide the project. Council members were recruited who had a breadth of experience in bridging very different worlds, cared deeply about the education of young children, and were connected to the sectors and communities with which we wanted to communicate.

A working group was formed in each cultural community—African American, Hmong, Latino-Mexican-Chicano, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, and Somali—to develop a first draft of best practices related to the Early Learning Standards. Each working group included at least one person who was well-grounded in child development or education and assessment theory; at least one person who had extensive experience in FFN care, and at least one person who was steeped in the wisdom of the cultural group. The working groups have completed a first iteration of best practices which have been aligned with the Early Learning Standards. In addition to being given to policy makers, educators, and agencies, this report will be taken back for discussion with families, key organizations, and institutions within the cultural communities on which we focused. We will then develop appropriate curricula, methods, and a variety of tools to communicate the information to families, teachers, child care providers, and parent educators so that children experience continuity as they transition into more formal care and education settings.

In addition to the working groups, focus groups were convened and interviews conducted in the five cultural communities.

The purpose of the interviews and focus groups was to begin identifying effective practices by asking families how they prepare their children for success. Families participating in the focus groups came from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. All had reared, or were in the process of rearing, young children who were doing well in school.

Interviewees were people working in a professional capacity with families using FFN care. They included educators, community leaders, psychologists, and the professional staff of community based organizations. They were familiar with success stories. Their exposure to families ranged from various types of in-home contacts to support services outside of the home. Many of the interviewees had experienced or utilized FFN care themselves. Some brought national and international perspectives.

The focus groups and eight of the interviews were conducted in the summer and fall of 2003. A second set of eight interviews was conducted in the fall of 2004, and a third set of nine focus groups was conducted in the summer of 2006.



## Aligning Best Practices with the Minnesota Early Learning Standards

The six domains of the Early Learning Standards are broken into 21 components with a total of 98 indicators (see appendix B). The indicators are subsets of the multilayered, complex resiliency skills that families are teaching. The expression of these indicators is most often embedded in the myriad practical tasks and family interactions in which children are involved. Many children who enter kindergarten from families of color may be far more advanced than teachers are prepared to accept. However, the skills and abilities of these children may not be captured by worksheets or by a predominantly industrial model for learning which places high value upon working independently, conformity, and limited interpersonal interactions. These children may be more accustomed to demonstrating math and literacy skills in solving complex problems that relate to their life experiences, as the first grade child who was labeled “special ed” showed when, unaided, he used public transportation to get to his counseling appointment on time after determining that his mother would be late.



In addition, many children of color are accustomed to learning in groups, through vibrant interactions, and through touch—especially by caring adults who clearly indicate their authority. Too often they—particularly African American boys—are penalized for the very behaviors that are valued in their homes and communities.

### Cognitive Development in Action

*Linda Winfield, Ph.D., describes an observation she made at an inner city elementary school in “Developing Resilience in Urban Youth,” a paper published in 1994 in the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory Urban Education Monograph Series:*

**After school one day**, a first grade special education student was missing when his mother arrived to pick him up. The teacher and principal called school security and the police searched the building and questioned other children in the class, but they could not locate the boy anywhere. The next day, I asked the principal what had finally happened. It turned out that the student’s mother had arrived late to pick him up and he knew that he had an appointment at a clinic downtown. The school routinely provided bus and transportation tokens for large numbers of students. So this student caught the mass transit system to get to the bus stop, then took the bus downtown and walked the remaining three or four blocks to make sure he was on time for his clinic appointment. The point is that this student, a first grader classified as “special ed,” was able to negotiate a complicated transportation system. When his mother had not picked him up on time, this first grader had inferred that she was not coming, devised a plan, used memory, and executed his plan to keep his appointment. Think of all of the higher-order cognitive skills that were required for him to accomplish this task!

## Selected Best Practices: A View

In this condensed report, there is one excerpt from the full report on each of the cultural communities on which we are focusing. The excerpts illustrate some of the complex, multi-faceted skills families are teaching and relate them to the Early Learning Standards.

For every excerpt, the consensus of a working group—African American, Hmong, Latino-Mexican-Chicano, Somali, or the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe—is summarized under one of the six domains of the Early Learning Standards: Social and Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, Language and Literacy Development, Creativity and the Arts, Cognitive Development, and Physical and Motor Development.

Immediately after each domain are listed its components. Then an example is given which illustrates some of the skills and abilities families are teaching. Following the example are our learnings about what best practices families are

using to teach those skills and abilities. Those best practices are followed by two or three of the relevant indicators in that domain and the components under which they are found.

Aspects of an example can be related to several domains, components, and indicators. For purposes of illustration, however, we are relating examples to only one domain and to no more than two components and two indicators. The components and indicators chosen for illustration do not imply that others *not* chosen are unimportant or inapplicable. Our choices are simply designed to show a range of components and indicators embedded within the experiences of children and their families.

The examples are composites of experiences and observations related in interviews, focus groups, and informal conversations. They illustrate the ways in which skills, capacities, and values are embedded in FFN care. They also show how the values and family and community structures reflected in FFN care can come into conflict with assumptions





embedded in dominant policies, practices, and research methodologies.

For example, most studies related to early care and education tend to group data by race, income, and education. Grouping data in this way often shows that children of color whose parents have low incomes and low levels of formal education do not perform as well in school. Although this association does not show a *causal* relationship, the distinction is often lost on much of the general public, educators, and many decision-makers.

In contrast, the examples show how many families of color do *not* closely associate formal education with intelligence; nor do they closely associate intelligence with high incomes. While they have great respect for formal education, highly value it for their children, and see

it as essential to economic opportunity, they view it as only one dimension through which human intelligence is demonstrated.

There are many families in which brilliant people with low levels of formal education are essential to the collective progress of the family. Their ingenuity plays a critical role in laying a foundation for the success of individual family members. There are also examples of children who are incredibly capable, insightful, and responsible within their family networks who do not perform well in school. And there are examples of people who have high levels of formal education, but are quite limited in vision and understanding. These “anomalies” within our current framework indicate that there is much work to be done on how issues are conceptualized,

researched, interpreted, and disseminated to affect policies and practice.

The examples also illustrate a plethora of abilities that are not yet captured by most instruments designed to measure the capacities of young children, but which many cultural communities value highly. These capacities incorporate a range of highly sophisticated, multi-layered skills, such as assessing situations, problem solving, and intervening to make a difference both with peers and in intergenerational interactions.

While preliminary best practices are listed for each ethnic group, it is important to note that:

- ▶ The best practices listed are not exclusive to that group.
- ▶ There are similarities and areas of overlap across groups.
- ▶ Groups that hold similar values can express them differently.
- ▶ Most importantly, cultures are always adapting and changing and are tempered by community, family, and individual styles and preferences.

**While many families of color have great respect for formal education, highly value it for their children, and see it as essential to economic opportunity, they view it as only one dimension through which human intelligence is demonstrated.**

Culture is fluid and influenced by many factors. Jackie Copeland-Carson speaks of “culture flows” in describing the mutable nature of culture in her

book, *Creating Africa in America: Translocal Identity in an Emerging World City* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

Although many of the examples presented here describe activities in which families across all cultures participate, it is important to remember that unspoken subtleties of touch, qualities of attention, tone, rhythm, sense of self, and *relatedness* are

also conveying meaning to children in deeply profound ways. For example, while social dance exists in European American, African American, and Latino communities, generally it looks quite different in each of them. These distinctions are a rich part of the cultural landscape. While these nuances are almost impossible to capture in brief written descriptions, they make a profound difference in how children understand themselves and the world.

This summary is a first step in expanding our awareness of the range of ways the skills and abilities outlined in the Early Learning Standards can be expressed and how these expressions can be influenced by culture.

## Excerpt: African American Working Group, Interviews, and Focus Groups

### DOMAIN: Approaches to Learning

#### Components:

Curiosity  
Risk-Taking  
Imagination and Invention  
Persistence  
Reflection and Interpretation

**Summary:** Among many families, approaches to learning are embedded in practical tasks and problem solving. Ingenuity that leads to practical results is valued, and children are encouraged to be assertive and to take initiative.

**Example:** Elan and Vanessa, ages two and three, share a bedroom with their five-year-old sister Jade. The bedroom is small, crowded, and full of activity. Jade often gets upset because Elan and Vanessa scatter their clothes on the floor, or worse, get them mixed up with hers. She frequently finds their socks and shirts thrown into her dresser drawers.

Jade is orderly by nature, and dressing for school has been a nightmare for her. She comes up with a solution. After asking her mom's permission, she cuts out magazine pictures of different types of clothes—underwear, socks, shirts, skirts, and pants. She tapes them to Elan and Vanessa's dresser drawers. Jade explains to her sisters that they must put their clothes in their own dresser drawers with the appropriate pictures.

Elan and Vanessa look up to Jade because she helps them, plays with them, and teaches them many things—the alphabet song, words she learns at

school, and how to behave properly. The room is much neater now, because Elan and Vanessa are putting their clothes in the proper drawers. Their mother is so proud of Jade's resourcefulness, and everybody gets dressed with a lot less confusion!

### Best Practices

- ▶ Families are teaching children to assess situations.
- ▶ Families are teaching children to be helpful and to be responsible for those who are younger.
- ▶ Families are teaching children to take the initiative in finding solutions.

### Indicators

#### Risk-Taking

Use a variety of strategies to solve problems.

#### Imagination and Invention

Approach tasks and experiences with flexibility, imagination, and inventiveness.



## Excerpt: Hmong Working Group, Interviews, and Focus Groups

### DOMAIN: Creativity and the Arts

#### Components:

Creating  
Responding  
Evaluating

**Summary:** In many families, art is part of tradition and is expressed in music, textiles, and designs that mark personal and family milestones and cultural events. While they are most visible during festivals and holidays, the skills that produce them are a daily fact of life.

**Example:** Four-year-old Mai See loves to watch when her great-grandmother and her elder friends get together and embroider. They make many of the special costumes that are used for festivals and other special events. Her great-grandmother's designs are known for their beauty and are especially admired.



Zoua, Mai See's 15-year-old sister, sews very well. She is trying out ways to use some of her great-grandmother's designs on blue jeans and jackets. She and her cousins are experimenting with different designs and colors. The first time they tried it, they sold everything at the outdoor market. Now they want to do more. Zoua thinks that they need some updated designs for more American tastes and younger people.

Zoua bought some paints, crayons, and paper for Mai See and her cousins, who are five and six years old, to share. She told them she wanted them to practice copying flowers from one of her books, and that if they did a good job, Zoua might use one of their flowers for the jeans. Mai See's great-grandmother reminded them that they are still children and warned them not to get too full of themselves.

#### Best Practices

- ▶ Families are teaching children that creativity is a shared experience.
- ▶ Families are teaching children that, in relation to their achievements, family and community are important considerations.
- ▶ Families are teaching children that older siblings are guides for exploration and must be treated with respect.

#### Indicators

##### Creating

Use a variety of media and materials for exploration and creative expression.

Participate in art and music experiences.

## Excerpt: Latino-Mexican-Chicano Working Group, Interviews, and Focus Groups

### DOMAIN: Cognitive Development

#### Components:

Mathematical and Logical Thinking  
Scientific Thinking and Problem-Solving  
Social Systems Understanding

**Summary:** In some families, there is a value placed upon doing what is necessary for the good of the whole—helping with chores, assisting a younger sibling or an older adult. Children are expected to see, assess, and contribute to doing what is necessary. Cognitive development takes place within many different contexts.

**Example:** One of three-year-old Juan's favorite pastimes is to watch his father and brother when they are building things. His father and brother made a table for the kitchen and a bed for Juan out of scrap material. Sometimes his father lets him help. Juan holds the ruler down when his father measures the wood. And he also passes him nails or screws from his pouch. He also has a regular job. His job is to make sure that all of the nails and screws that are the same size are together. Whenever Juan finds a nail or screw outside or on the floor, he picks it up and puts it in the correct box. If there are no similar nails, he puts it on the shelf and tells his father.



### Best Practices

- ▶ Families are teaching children the value of experience, practical knowledge, and working together.
- ▶ Families are teaching children that talents and skills contribute to the well-being of the family.
- ▶ Families are teaching children that their abilities and efforts are important, and other family members are relying on them.
- ▶ Families are embedding mathematical skills in daily routines and practical tasks.

### Indicators

#### Patterns and Relationships

Sort objects into subgroups by one or two characteristics.

#### Investigating

Make comparisons between objects that have been collected or observed.

## Excerpt: Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Working Group, Interviews, and Focus Groups

### DOMAIN: Language and Literacy Development

#### Components:

Listening  
Speaking  
Emergent Reading  
Emergent Writing

*Summary and example given by Mille Lacs elders assisted by Candi Aubid, MSW, LICSW*

**Summary:** Focus on the importance of listening and responding is consistent with Ojibwe customs. To honor this tradition, the example is presented in the Elder's own words.

**Example:** *As told by an Elder:* "One evening it was raining. Three of them (my grandchildren) came back in the bedroom and I said come out here and shut the television off. Sit down and I'm going to read you a story. I had just started the Mishomis book by Eddy Benton Banai. They sat still. When it was time to quit they didn't want to quit. When you all get together again I will finish reading it to you. We are half done with it now. And the questions they would interrupt with every once in a while . . . 'What is this; why do they do that; what is that for?' When the poor muskrat [in the story]

died, the one little one had tears coming out of his eyes. So I try to get the books that are Indian stories or if there is an Indian movie on I try to get them to come and watch—Like *Smoke Signals*.\*

"I was taught that listening and speaking are important values. Communication is important. Ojibwe language is number one. 'Language nurtures the Spirit.' My parents instilled the importance of listening. I was told when I was young that if I didn't listen to those teachings I would not know respect. And when I got older I wouldn't have respect for our fellow man. They also told me that someday I would be able to use what they were teaching me in my life."

#### Best Practices

- ▶ Families are teaching children the value of listening and enhancing their understanding of Ojibwe teachings.
- ▶ Families are encouraging interaction that promotes speaking and the development of sounds through traditional Ojibwe storytelling and song.
- ▶ Families are enhancing children's ability for reading through story time and modeling.

#### Indicators

##### Listening

Understand the significance of listening.

##### Emergent Reading

Model the importance of reading.



\**Smoke Signals* is a movie written and co-produced by Sherman Alexie and directed by Chris Eyre, both Native American. It received 7 national and international awards, including the Sundance Film Festival Audience Award and Filmmakers Trophy and the Tokyo International Film Festival Best Artistic Contribution Award.

## Excerpt: Somali Working Group, Interviews, and Focus Groups

### DOMAIN: Social and Emotional Development

#### Components:

Emotional Development

Self-Concept

Social Competence and Relationships

**Summary:** Somali children learn by watching what the elders in their lives are doing, and how they resolve complex issues. Somali families tend to be larger than the typical American family. It is not uncommon to find extended family members living under the same roof. Because of this rather cramped and crowded environment, Somali children learn to coexist with others and to share their space and belongings. This value is one of the pillars of Islam, the dominant religion in the Somali community.

**Example:** Hassan, age four, lives with his single mother in the West Bank area. His mother Hawa chose to live in that area because of her sister. Hassan spends lots of time at his aunt's house, she helps him with homework, and he gets to play with his cousins. Hassan's mother speaks very little English, but her sister is bit more fluent in English. His cousin Ayan, who is in high school, speaks fluent English.

Hassan and his family rely on the Somali community institutions that are in the area, the community center, and the mosque where children go to learn the Koran and receive Islamic education. Hassan is learning both cultures, American and Somali, from the two centers.



Hassan also spends time with his uncle Yonis who takes him to the mosque for Friday prayers, a very important activity for every young Somali boy. This is where he meets the members of the Somali/ Islamic community and learns who they are. After Friday prayers, the Somali men engage in male bonding activities, which begins with lunch and ends with a late afternoon traditional tea ceremony.

#### Best Practices

- ▶ Families are teaching children about the complex social norms in the Somali community, while encouraging them to learn and assimilate into the American way of life.
- ▶ Families are teaching children the importance of family values.
- ▶ Families are teaching children that family relationships extend beyond the household.

#### Indicators

##### Self-Concept

Begin to develop awareness, knowledge, and acceptance of own gender and cultural identity.

##### Social Competence and Relationships

Begin to understand others' rights and privileges.

## Parents and Caregivers Speak

Ready 4 K contracted with Families and Children Services (FCS), a Minneapolis nonprofit, to conduct eight culturally-specific focus groups held in June and July of 2006. Two focus groups were convened for each of four cultural communities—African American, Hmong, Latino-Mexican-Chicano, and Somali. Under the direction of Lois Gunderson, Hmong, Mexican-Chicano-Latino, and Somali groups were conducted in the participants' native language. Over eighty parents and caregivers participated. The FCS compiled a report examining the learning styles and parenting practices of each cultural community, as identified by the parents and caregivers who participated. It also finds further evidence of universal practices of good parenting, such as the importance of good communication and modeling positive behavior.

Following are direct quotes from focus group participants. Also included are quotes from an urban Mille Lacs Band focus group, organized by the Mille Lacs Band Urban Office. These quotes illustrate how children from each cultural group demonstrate proficiency in the six domains comprising the early childhood indicators of progress, as defined by the Early Learning Standards.

The quotes represent both best practices that families are using as well as the proficiencies that children are demonstrating. Each quote can apply to more domains than the one under which it is listed.

## Social and Emotional Development

**When my daughter was in first grade she said, "Mom, there is a Somali girl in my class. This teacher puts this Somali girl in time out and tells her to face the wall. This girl's father is dead and she does not speak good English. There is no one to help her talk to the teacher. Dad, will you come to school and talk to the teacher so that she would stop putting this poor girl's face to the wall?"**

**SOMALI PARENT/CAREGIVER**

**Oldest kids are deliberately taught to care for the younger ones. In our family, my husband made that clear to them and it was an expectation that they met. I learned to appreciate the early gifts of children who are, after all, really very good teachers.**

**AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENT/CAREGIVER**

**My youngest child always imitates her older sibling. As siblings, they teach and support one another.**

**LATINO-MEXICAN-CHICANO PARENT/CAREGIVER**

**I was surprised to see my grandson, who is only 5, talk about his dream of helping me and providing for me when he's an adult. I was stunned by his words. I never knew that a kid that little can know how to speak like that.**

**HMONG PARENT/CAREGIVER**

**They learn by watching older ones . . . [We are] explaining, praising, watching everyday. Take the time to do things slowly. Explain when you do things and talk them through it. Then they catch on.**

**MILLE LACS BAND OF OJIBWE PARENT/CAREGIVER**



## Approaches to Learning

I listen to my children, talk to them, and explain things. They are very curious and ask me all kinds of questions. If they were in the room with us right now they would ask, “What is this? What is that? Who is that? How are we related? What are we going to do today?” Thanks to Allah, I have a good relationship with them.

SOMALI PARENT/CAREGIVER

My oldest child always helped the janitors in our building, especially if it was outside work. Every morning he would leave our apartment and pitch in. He expected to go and they expected him to be there. I think the entertainment value was mutual.

AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENT/CAREGIVER

I know a little boy who is 3 years old. His mom was surprised that he started getting the dishes to the sink and wants to help in the house with no one telling him he has to do those things.

I think siblings help each other learn a lot. They’re always learning from watching one another.

LATINO-MEXICAN-CHICANO PARENT/CAREGIVER

In observing my brother’s children, children learn how to do things for themselves like eating, feeding themselves, and sharing their food with you when they are about age two. Parents, aunts, and grandparents guide them in what they are doing correctly and what things they are doing wrong.

My nephew is learning how to make ramen noodles now, so when he’s hungry and I don’t have time, I encourage him to make noodles for himself. I watch him so that he can learn how. The thing is not to yell at

them or discourage them. If you do, then they will give up and develop a habit of giving up.

HMONG PARENT/CAREGIVER

I have a five year old and she helps my daughter at the table and helps to bring the food and helps prepare it. I have a two year old, and he helps with the laundry. He takes it out the washer and puts in the dryer. And he tries to help mop up when he spills.

I have a seven year old and a three year old. My seven year old takes off the [bed] linen [when it is time to do laundry], and now my three year old does it.

MILLE LACS BAND OF OJIBWE  
PARENT/CAREGIVER



## Language and Literacy Development

There is a written rule on the wall that says; “When you enter this home, talk in your mother/native tongue.” Now they know the Somali language really well. There are research findings that indicate children who speak more than one language make that child smarter than those who speak only one. So if you work hard, teach your child how to read and write your own language, then s/he will learn other languages easier. I would say, try to teach the Somali first. Children will learn English, but it is our job as parents to teach them Somali.

SOMALI PARENT/CAREGIVER

Before our kids could read, they turned pages and pretended to read—and actually told a pretty good story. Even when my kids were two, when I wasn’t feeling so hot, they would have me lie down and pretend to read me a story. For them, it was a way of providing comfort to me.

AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENT/CAREGIVER

**My niece speaks two languages and she is only two years old. It is so amazing that she has such good pronunciation in both languages. My nephews learned both languages when they were young, but now that they are older, their Spanish is very bad because they spend more time with friends than they do with family.**

**LATINO-MEXICAN-CHICANO PARENT/CAREGIVER**

**What surprised me once was when my nephew would see an advertisement on TV about some online website with toys and he would come over and tell me that he wants to go on that website. He knows where to type it in and remembers the website correctly also.**

**HMONG PARENT/CAREGIVER**

**When my daughter was two, I'd read to her everyday. I was reading and would skip things, so she'd stop me and read the passage to me. She'd do that with several books.**

**MILLE LACS BAND OF OJIBWE  
PARENT/CAREGIVER**



## **Creativity and the Arts**

**We lived in an old apartment and rather than tell me about the broken kitchen door, all four of my children teamed up to hide it from me. The two boys stood in front of the door so I wouldn't see it. One daughter made my lunch and the other one got my shoes. They said I was running late even though I knew I was not. Anyway, I left without noticing the broken kitchen door. I knew something was up because they never would have done anything like that for me. When I came home my two year old said, "Why are you so little?" Only a young child would need that much help getting out of the door in the morning. Now my daughter**

**teases me every time someone walks in the door saying, "My mom is a little girl!"**

**SOMALI PARENT/CAREGIVER**

**Our church has a talent show and we encourage each and every one of those children. It seems to me that our children are creating and responding to how God guides them. As parents, our job is to take what is already there—take what's in them to where it will go without having any "shoulds."**

**Give our kids an empty box and they could make anything out of it—a car, a taxi or a bus. Sheets and blankets became a house. They would occupy themselves for hours. They made things with what they had and taught the neighborhood kids too.**

**AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENT/CAREGIVER**

**We bought a new TV and my son asked to keep the box. That box is his house. He brings his pillow and his blanket and he loves to sleep in it. He uses the pillows to create castles and I add on to the house with blankets. I play in the house with him and he serves me imaginary food which I can only eat after I use the restroom and wash my hands.**

**LATINO-CHICANO-MEXICAN PARENT/CAREGIVER**

**My niece, when she was only two, could sing a full verse of a traditional song, and it surprised all of us. My grandmother at the time was really thrown.**

**HMONG PARENT/CAREGIVER**

**I raised five boys, and I'd make them sing [traditional songs] with me. Now I teach my older granddaughters songs that my grandmother sang to my boys, and they ask me to sing it again. They'll carry it on. And now they ask about the meaning.**

**MILLE LACS BAND OF OJIBWE  
PARENT/CAREGIVER**

## Physical and Motor Development

We don't need a gym. My children are always running. If we go outside, they play at the playgrounds. You can tell they burn lots of calories because they eat really well and sleep and rest well too. Even at home they are using the stairs. Some parents take children outside a lot but others may keep them at home and provide structured activities like writing. They are probably more successful. Parents teach their children. They don't learn on their own.

SOMALI PARENT/CAREGIVER

As a father, I was very intentional about teaching these things because I learned on the street. I played football with my son and went running with my daughter and taught them a lot about how to take care of themselves as whole, healthy people. I am not just talking about physical health but everything that comprises health.

AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENT/CAREGIVER

My son helps me to clean the house. He can pick up his toys and helps with dishes. He is 2½ years old.

My son loves to play rodeo. Of course, I have to be the bull and he is the cowboy.

LATINO-MEXICAN-CHICANO  
PARENT/CAREGIVER

My sons love soccer and the computer. They play games all the time. I could take forever to figure out the remote control, but my five year old can figure it out in no time by pushing buttons over and over again.

HMONG PARENT/CAREGIVER

My daughter has been dancing since she was 6 months. I got her a jingle dress. I found someone to make it in a day. I was able to find baby jingles and ties. My family

all dances. My daughter went [to a Pow-Wow to dance] with her grandmother. She went out there like it was natural!

MILLE LACS BAND OF OJIBWE  
PARENT/CAREGIVER

## Cognitive Development

My three year old son went to enroll in Islamic school on his own. I was always working to make ends meet and even though he asked me several times to take him to the Dugsi [school] I never had a chance to do that. One day he followed his older brothers to the Dugsi. He told the teacher that I work a lot and do not have time to bring him. He wanted to learn the Quran and implored the teacher to teach him. When I came back from my job, he told me how he went to the Dugsi and what he told the teacher. I imagine the teacher was surprised as well. The next day, I did not go to work. I took my son to the Dugsi to properly register him and pay the fee.

I have a son, he is very tough. He was one year old. I was looking for some of my clothes and could not find them anywhere. Then my son brought them to me. He said "Mom, here are the clothes you were looking for!"

SOMALI PARENT/CAREGIVER

My son was always interested in understanding how things work. He was always peering into mechanical things to try so see the working parts. When he was about three years old, his dad taught him to use a toy screwdriver and one day he found our screwdriver and took the VCR apart. The amazing thing is that he put it back together and it worked!

AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENT/CAREGIVER

**When my son was nearly four years old, I worked at night. Normally, when I arrived at home, the kids were upstairs in bed. But one night when I came home and went into the kitchen, my son was preparing food. He put an egg on bread and made a complete sandwich for me. He knew my habits—when I arrived home and what I did and explained, “Mom, when you arrive you always cook food and eat.”**

**LATINO-CHICANO-MEXICAN PARENT/CAREGIVER**

**I have a younger sister who is 4, and she surprised me when she was able to pick up my cell phone and dial my dad, my grandma, and my mom’s number. And I’d ask her who taught her, and she would say that she did it herself.**

**Sometimes after work I’d come home and I would find my four year old sister at the computer playing Solitaire. I would think that she didn’t know what she was doing, but when I looked closely she does. She stacks the cards correctly and is doing the right thing. She’d tell me that she learned it from her older sister and brothers.**

**HMONG PARENT/CAREGIVER**

**My son is three years old and we were separating the laundry. It was just me and him, and I can’t lift much. He said, “ Mom, grab the other side[of the basket]”. He put the key in the lock [of the door to the apartment] and said, “Just push!”**

**My daughter likes to observe and then she tries to do it. She’ll change DVDs and uses the remote too. She puts her music on the CD player and will turn on the computer. She sets her own routines. Like getting the mail. And turning off the lights when we leave.**

**MILLE LACS BAND OF THE OJIBWE  
PARENT/CAREGIVER**

## **Current Research Supports Families’ Holistic Approach**

Across all of the cultural groups, families are first and foremost teaching resiliency. Embedded in that teaching are the skills and capacities included in the Early Learning Standards. Project Competence, a twenty-year longitudinal study of resiliency in Minneapolis children, identified a list of factors and systems implicated by the study as contributing to resiliency. The study, directed by Ann Masten, Ph.D., Distinguished McKnight Scholar, Institute for Child Development, was initiated by the University of Minnesota. There were 205 participants, boys and girls, 27% of whom were minorities. All were attending urban city schools. Extensive information was gathered about the children, including family and individual qualities. The participants were interviewed after seven, ten, and twenty years.

Masten developed a short list of protective factors suggested by the research (“Children Who Overcome Adversity to Succeed in Life”; University of Minnesota Extension Service publication number BU-07565; 2000). Those factors include:

- ▶ Connections to other competent and caring adults
- ▶ Good intellectual skills
- ▶ Self-efficacy
- ▶ Talents valued by society and self
- ▶ A sense of meaning in life
- ▶ Faith and religious affiliations
- ▶ Community resources

Across each of the cultural groups included in the study three commonalities of practices are emerging to instill in children these protective qualities:



**1. Families are focusing on emotional intelligence as the key to forming relationships and the foundation for future learning.** The power and significance of emotional intelligence in human development is being recognized by a growing number of researchers.\*

\*In the early 1990s, John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey published a series of papers on emotional intelligence (Salovey and Mayer 1990; Mayer and Salovey 1993). The Mayer-Salovey model defines emotional intelligence as the capacity to understand emotional information and to reason with emotions. They divide emotional intelligence abilities into four areas in their four-branch model:

- ▶ The capacity to accurately perceive emotions.
- ▶ The capacity to use emotions to facilitate thinking.
- ▶ The capacity to understand emotional meanings.
- ▶ The capacity to manage emotions.

**2. Families are emphasizing self-mastery, including three components of consciousness:**

- ▶ *Fluidity*—the ability to be aware of and connect with several dynamics simultaneously.
- ▶ *Focus*—the ability to direct and maintain attention on one dynamic regardless of internal or external circumstances.
- ▶ *Choice*—the ability to determine where and how one wants to direct and maintain attention at any given time.

**3. Families are teaching spiritual values of empathy, cooperation, reciprocity, and the desire to contribute for the good of the whole.** The concept of humans as spiritual beings who have a responsibility to a higher power and to each other is the foundation on which these values are based. Mutual help, reciprocity, and community stewardship are viewed as reflections of this concept, rather than merely a system of exchange.

## There is a Role for Everyone

It is imperative for us to develop a partnership that nurtures children and allows them to develop their full potential. There is a role for everyone—including families, teachers and child care providers, and community—to play in creating this partnership for school-readiness.

**Families** must acquaint themselves with the Early Learning Standards. They must also learn more about the decision-making process of schools and school districts so that they can become effective advocates for their children.

**Teachers and child care providers** must expand their knowledge about other cultural communities and deepen their understanding of the strengths and assets of those communities. Schools must change their internal systems to be more receptive to extended families—including older siblings—and to a wide range of

cultural communities. The institutions that train teachers and child care providers must take a leadership role.

**Communities**, through civic engagement and through their organizations and institutions that serve as intermediaries to the larger society, must become more proactive advocates for early care and education. They must also serve as brokers in creating bridges between families, schools, and policy makers.

Our future depends upon crafting this partnership. It would be a tragic failure of imagination and of public will to force a choice between resiliency and academic skills. Children must have both.

Learnings from this project clearly suggest that an overarching best practice among families and across cultural groups, is to embed academic skills within resiliency learning. The importance of resiliency and the systems that support it to the cohesion of families, communities, and the achievements of children cannot be overstated. They contribute to civil society, business growth and productivity, and to the human and financial capital of this country. It is critical to recognize this overarching practice, as well as those best practices that support it.

Developing ways to support these best practices among families, teachers and child care providers, and communities can create a new future for many young children. It will generate a partnership of peers between families, schools, and communities—and a viable future on which we can all rely.

### Learnings

- ▶ To enhance early learning, view children holistically—as members of families and communities, and as participants in their culture.
- ▶ Take an asset-based view of ethnic communities from *their* perspective in order to both build on and leverage those assets for school readiness.
- ▶ Include researchers and academicians of color, across disciplines, in state and national dialogues on early childhood education.
- ▶ Eliminate excessive and inappropriate competition between FFN caregivers and licensed caregivers by developing and promoting business models in which FFN caregivers and licensed caregivers work as partners rather than competitors.

## Recommendations: Envisioning the Future

**1. To ensure that best practices are incorporated in FFN care, use a family investment model instead of a professional development model to support caregivers and disseminate information.** A family investment model is driven by families; views children holistically; takes into consideration children's connections to their families, communities, and culture; and is voluntary and flexible. It leverages, in an intentional way, the considerable investments that families are already making by offering information and other supports through organizations that serve as cultural intermediaries and by providing opportunities for peer learning. It builds in incentives for learning, and recognition and celebrations for achievements.

In essence, a family investment model makes information available to families, supports the full range of their choices, and views the family as the primary decision-maker for early care and education. Families, as informed consumers, can then help to shape the marketplace—a strategy suggested by Art Rolnick, Senior Vice President of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Families may choose a variety of early care and education settings based upon their needs and values, and combine them as they see fit. At different stages and times, they may want settings that emphasize cultural identity, language and bi-cultural skills, the ability to navigate in the home culture and in the larger society, and academic skills. They may not be able to

find all of these qualities in one setting. Therefore, flexibility is essential.

**2. Support the development of culturally appropriate curricula on best practices** for families, providers, and parent educators through the Early Childhood Resource and Training Center (ECRTC), a non-profit with long standing ties to cultural and immigrant communities that offers culturally specific training statewide. ECRTC can take the lead, partnering and collaborating with other nonprofits and universities, such as Metro State University and the University of Minnesota, to build upon and expand the work generated by this project. It can then, as it has in the past, train staff from Head Start, Early Childhood Family Education, and the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network in addition to its own network of providers.

**A family investment model leverages, in an intentional way, the considerable investments that families are already making in their children. It offers information and other supports through organizations that serve as cultural intermediaries and provides opportunities for peer learning.**

**3. Incorporate competency-based equivalents in degree-granting programs to increase the pool of credentialed child care providers, parent educators, and teachers of color.** They can serve as an important bridge to FFN caregivers in cultural communities, and their experiences can inform the field, thereby increasing the continuity children experience when transitioning from FFN care into other early care and education settings. Some universities, such as Mankato State University, have already moved forward in the articulation of standards for life experience.



**4. Recruit more participants of color to degree programs in higher education** that are related to early care and education by:

- ▶ Making available more scholarships, grants and other types of financial assistance.
- ▶ Offering more online courses.
- ▶ Offering classes in community settings.

**5. Retain and build capacity for early care and education within communities** by:

- ▶ Ensuring that new public policies and regulations do not unfairly penalize smaller family care settings, thereby eliminating an essential link in the chain of choices available to families.
- ▶ Using community-based organizations that serve as cultural intermediaries as platforms for delivering FFN support.

## Questions for Discussion

### For Teachers, Schools, and Universities

1. How can kindergarten teachers recognize the skills and capacities these children have acquired, and how can they relate them to Minnesota's Early Learning Standards?
2. In what ways can kindergarten classes be organized to support, build upon, and extend the multifaceted, applied learning experiences in which these children excel?
3. What changes can be made to curricula, methodologies, and instructional strategies to embrace the holistic skills of these children?
4. How can group learning across age and grade levels be incorporated into kindergarten?
5. How can class management strategies adapt to recognize, reflect, and support spiritual values and concepts of the common good?
6. How can schools be made more welcoming to extended families?

### For Families

1. In what ways can you let your child's teacher or care provider know the range of things your child can do?
2. In what ways can you expand the teacher or child care provider's understanding of your culture and values?
3. How can you find out what expectations the teacher or child care provider has of your child?
4. How can you support the teacher or child care provider in his/her learning?
5. When and how will your child be tested or assessed, for what, and by whom?
6. How can you organize the members of your family to be advocates for your child's early education?
7. When you need advice and information, what sources are accessible and compatible with your culture?

### For Formal Child Care Providers

1. How can you use the Child Care Resource and Referral Network to become more familiar with Early Learning Standards?
2. How can you help prepare children for their transition to kindergarten?
3. How can you inform families about what to expect when their children transition to kindergarten?
4. How can you build upon the range of things children can do and connect them to the Early Learning Standards in culturally appropriate ways?
5. What resources do you need to enhance your ability to work with children from culturally diverse backgrounds, and where can you find them? ([www.ecrc1.org](http://www.ecrc1.org))
6. What resources are available through the local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency in your area? ([www.mnchildcare.org](http://www.mnchildcare.org))

### For Community Organizations and Institutions

1. In what ways can you become more engaged in providing information for families, including your employees, that will help them care and educate their young children?
2. In what ways can you help families exchange information on best practices among themselves?
3. How can you be a more effective advocate for the full range of child care choices that families make?
4. In what ways can you be a link between families and policy makers whose decisions affect young children and impact the capacity of families and communities to care for them?
5. How can you be an information link between families and schools?

**APPENDIX A**

**Family, Friend, and Neighbor  
Care Best Practices  
Advisory Council Members**

**Meghan Brown**

Senior Human Resources Representative  
Target Corporation

**Lisa Lissimore**

Associate Director  
MN State High School League

**Kazoua Kong-Thao**

Board of Directors  
St. Paul Public School  
Board of Education

**Milissa Silva-Diaz**

Owner/Director  
El Burrito Mercado

**Samuel Moose**

Commissioner of Health  
and Human Services  
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

**Molly O'Shaughnessy**

Director  
Montessori Training Center  
of Minnesota

**Joycelyn Shingobe**

Commissioner of Education  
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

**Vangeline Ortega**

Community Adviser/Organizer

## APPENDIX B Minnesota's Early Learning Standards

Minnesota's Early Learning Standards are intended to provide a framework for understanding and communicating a common set of developmentally appropriate expectations for young children within a context of shared responsibility and accountability for helping children meet these expectations. It is divided into six domains that reflect the range of child development. Each domain is further divided into three to five components that list indicators of children's progress in gaining concepts, knowledge, and skills. These indicators apply to children in the preschool period of ages three to five. They are based on expectations for children approximately four years of age.

### Social and Emotional Development

#### Emotional Development

1. Demonstrate increasing competency in recognizing and describing own emotions
2. Demonstrate increasing use of words instead of actions to express emotions
3. Begin to understand and respond to others' emotions
4. Begin to show self-regulation to handle emotions appropriately
5. Explore a wide range of emotions in different ways (e.g., through play, art, music dance)
6. Respond to praise, limits, and correction

#### Self-Concept

1. Begin to experiment with own potential and show confidence in own abilities
2. Demonstrate increasing self-direction and independence

Indicators reprinted from *Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Standards* published by the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2005.

3. Develop an awareness of self as having certain abilities, characteristics, and preferences
4. Begin to develop awareness, knowledge, and acceptance of own gender and cultural identity

#### Social Competence and Relationships

1. Interact easily with one or more children
2. Interact easily with familiar adults
3. Approach others with expectations of positive interactions
4. Begin to participate successfully as a member of a group
5. Use play to explore, practice, and understand social roles and relationships
6. Begin to understand others' rights and privileges
7. Sustain interaction by cooperating, helping, sharing, and expressing interest
8. Seek adult help when needed for emotional support, physical assistance, social interaction, and approval
9. Use words and other constructive strategies to resolve conflicts

### Approaches to Learning

#### Curiosity

1. Show eagerness and a sense of wonder as a learner
2. Show interest in discovering and learning new things

#### Risk-Taking

1. Choose new as well as a variety of familiar activities
2. Use a variety of strategies to solve problems

#### Imagination and Invention

1. Approach tasks and experiences with flexibility, imagination, and inventiveness
2. Use new ways or novel strategies to solve problems or explore objects
3. Try out various pretend roles in play or with make-believe objects

**Persistence**

1. Work at a task despite distractions or interruptions
2. Seek and/or accept help or information when needed
3. Demonstrate ability to complete a task or stay engaged in an experience

**Reflections and Interpretation**

1. Think about events and experiences and apply this knowledge to new situations
2. Generate ideas, suggestions, and/or make predictions

**Language and Literacy Development****Listening**

1. Understand non-verbal and verbal cues
2. Listen with understanding to stories, directions, and conversations
3. Follow directions that involve a two or three-step sequence of actions
4. Listen to and recognize different sounds in rhymes and familiar

**Speaking**

1. Communicate needs, wants, or thoughts, through non-verbal gestures, actions, expressions, and/or words
2. Communicate information using home language and/or English
3. Speak clearly enough to be understood in home language and/or English
4. Use language for a variety of purposes
5. Use increasingly complex and varied vocabulary and language
6. Initiate, ask questions, and respond in conversation with others

**Emergent Reading**

1. Initiate stories and respond to stories told or read aloud
2. Represent stories told or read aloud through various media or during play
3. Guess what will happen next in a story using pictures as a guide
4. Retell information from a story
5. Show beginning understanding of concepts about print

6. Recognize and name some letters of the alphabet, especially those in own name
7. Begin to associate sounds with words or letters

**Emergent Writing**

1. Understand that writing is a way of communicating
2. Use scribbles, shapes, pictures, or dictation to represent thoughts or ideas
3. Engage in writing using letter-like symbols to make letters or words
4. Begin to copy or write own name

**Creativity and the Arts****Creating**

1. Use a variety of media and materials for exploration and creative expression
2. Participate in art and music experiences
3. Participate in creative movement, drama, and dance

**Responding**

1. Show others and/or talk about what they have made or done
2. Show interest and respect for the creative work of self and others

**Evaluating**

1. Share experiences, ideas, and thoughts about art and creative expression
2. Share opinions about likes and dislikes in art and creative expression

**Cognitive Development****Mathematical and Logical Thinking****NUMBER CONCEPTS AND OPERATIONS**

1. Demonstrate increasing interest in and awareness of numbers and counting
2. Demonstrate understanding of one-to-one correspondence between object and number
3. Demonstrate ability to count in sequence
4. Demonstrate ability to state the number that comes next up to 9 or 10
5. Demonstrate beginning ability to combine and separate numbers of objects

**PATTERNS AND RELATIONSHIPS**

1. Recognize and duplicate simple patterns
2. Sort objects into subgroups by one or two characteristics
3. Order or sequence several objects on the basis of one characteristic

**SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS/GEOMETRY**

1. Identify and name common shapes
2. Use words that show understanding of order and position of objects

**MEASUREMENT**

1. Recognize objects can be measured by height, length, weight, and time
2. Make comparisons between at least two groups of objects

**MATHEMATICAL REASONING**

1. Use simple strategies to solve mathematical problems.

**Scientific Thinking and Problem-Solving****OBSERVING**

1. Use senses to explore materials and the environment
2. Identify and/or describe objects by physical characteristics

**QUESTIONING**

1. Express wonder about the natural world
2. Ask questions and seek answers through active exploration
3. Make predictions about objects and natural events

**INVESTIGATING**

1. Use tools (e.g., magnifying glass, binoculars, maps) for investigation of the environment
2. Make comparisons between objects that have been collected or observed

**Social Systems Understanding****HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS**

1. Recognize and appreciate similarities and differences between self and others from diverse backgrounds
2. Understand various family roles, jobs, rules, and relationships

3. Participate in activities to help others in the community

**UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD**

1. Recognize and describe the roles of workers in the community
2. Share responsibility in taking care of their environment
3. Begin to recall recent and past events
4. Identify characteristics of the places where they live and play within their community
5. Begin to understand the uses of media and technology and how they affect their lives

**Physical and Motor Development****Gross Motor Development**

1. Develop large muscle control and coordination
2. Develop body strength, balance, flexibility, and stamina
3. Use a variety of equipment for physical development
4. Develop ability to move their body in space with coordination

**Fine Motor Development**

1. Develop small muscle control and coordination
2. Use eye-hand coordination to perform a variety of tasks
3. Explore and experiment with a variety of tools (e.g., spoons, crayons, paintbrushes, scissors, keyboards)

**Physical Health and Well-Being**

1. Participate in a variety of physical activities to enhance personal health and physical fitness
2. Follow basic health and safety rules
3. Recognize and eat a variety of nutritious foods
4. Demonstrate increasing independence with basic self-care skills

## APPENDIX C What Difference Do Social Networks Make?

With support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Institute for the Study of Social Policy, an independent Washington, D.C.-based think tank, has examined the importance of social networks for school readiness. They have identified the positive impact social networks have on children and their families—including those who are “at risk.”

For example, they have found that social networks strengthen a sense of identity and value for everyone. For the most vulnerable, they change the sense of self and build trust; within a school readi-

ness context, they validate the parenting role and reinforce a “parent as first teacher” identity. They also have found that social networks reinforce norms for everyone. For the most vulnerable, they expand horizons and change behaviors, expectations, and hopes; within a school readiness context, change parenting and educational involvement norms.

Table © 2005 by Nilofer Ahsan, Center for the Study of Social Policy

<b>For Everyone</b>	<b>For Most Vulnerable</b>	<b>Within a School Readiness Context</b>
Strengthen sense of identity and value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Change sense of self</li> <li>▶ Change sense of others/build trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Value the parenting role</li> <li>▶ Reinforce a “parent as first teacher” identity</li> </ul>
Reinforce norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Change behaviors</li> <li>▶ Expand horizons</li> <li>▶ Change expectations and possibilities/hopes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Change parenting and educational involvement norms</li> <li>▶ Align home and school expectations</li> </ul>
Expand social outlets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Reduce stress and isolation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Parent social networks serve as a “binder” to educational settings</li> <li>▶ Provide parent support through parent group activities</li> <li>▶ Support social emotional development through children’s group activities</li> </ul>

**For Everyone**

**For Most Vulnerable**

**Within a School  
Readiness Context**

Facilitate information flow

Translate (both languages and concepts) information for families.

- ▶ Help connect parents to quality early childhood setting
- ▶ Exchange of parenting and child development information

Facilitate resource flow

Provide safety nets and informal supports

- ▶ Help parents get to and access ECE and health services
- ▶ Help parents find activities and resources to support their educational engagement with their child

Transfer trusting relationships

Expand supportive network; expand access; provide references

- ▶ Engage parents who have had negative educational experiences
- ▶ Provide referrals for ECE providers, pediatricians, and other key EC resources

Facilitate collective action

Connect to advocates

- ▶ Encourage self-initiated ECE resources—e.g., babysitting coops
- ▶ Engage parents as advocates for their children

Reinforce cultural and community identity

Create a sense of cultural connection

- ▶ Reinforce language and cultural teachings
- ▶ Provide multicultural context for family's own culture

**APPENDIX D****Family Friend and Neighbor Care Best Practices Chronology****The Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care Best Practices Project At-A-Glance**

Used by urban and rural families, across all income levels and racial and ethnic groups, family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care offers a remarkable opportunity to develop a shared vision for family-friendly policies that support early care and education.

Many ethnic communities prefer FFN care because it enables them to transfer cultural values, language, and traditions to their children.

A majority of families in Minnesota use extended family for child care or caregivers who are part of their cultural community.

**PHASE I****2003**

Ready 4 K, with support from the McKnight Foundation, and in partnership with several organizations, develops a road map for an early education system in Minnesota. The road map outlines a plan for giving children access to high-quality early learning experiences across the full range of early care and education their families choose—from FFN care to center-based care.

An assessment of a statewide sample of kindergarten students finds that a disturbing number of children of color are not proficient in skills they are expected to have when entering kindergarten. As with similar assessments in other states, low levels of proficiency are associated with children from families with lower levels of education and low incomes. However, there are also numerous examples of intergenerational leaps in educational achievement within cultural communities,

across income levels—often in challenging circumstances.

**2004**

With support from the Bush Foundation, Ready 4 K begins the Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care Best Practices Project to learn how five cultural communities prepare their children for school success. The communities are African American, Hmong, Latino-Mexican-Chicano\*, and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. By talking with families whose children have done well, the goal of the project is to discover what and how families are teaching their children, and to align those “best practices” with Minnesota’s Early Learning Standards. The information will then be disseminated in a variety of ways to families, child care providers, and to kindergarten teachers.

\*Includes North, South, and Central American, Caribbean, and Southern European cultural influences

The Minnesota Department of Education, with the Minnesota Department of Human Services, release the *Early Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Standards*, a framework by which a child's school readiness can be assessed. The Early Learning Standards focus on six domains: Social and Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, Language and Literacy Development, Creativity and the Arts, Cognitive Development, and Physical and Motor Development.

#### **2005**

Working groups are formed in the four cultural communities. Working groups examine the Early Learning Standards to see how they might be understood, expressed, and valued in their cultural communities. In addition, focus groups are convened and interviews are conducted to identify family care and education practices.

Results indicate that the expression and understanding of the Early Learning Standard indicators are influenced by culture. Children could be demonstrating skills and capacities that are unrecognized by teachers who do not understand how they are being expressed. In addition, most of the families are unaware of the Early Learning Standards.

#### **Phase I Learnings**

- ▶ Families are teaching resiliency and embedding academic skills into practical tasks.
- ▶ Families are focusing on emotional intelligence, self-mastery, and spiritual values of empathy, cooperation, reciprocity, and the desire to contribute for the good of the whole.
- ▶ Families want continuity for their children who are learning these complex skills and capacities as they transition across FFN care through center-based care, and into kindergarten.

## **PHASE II**

#### **2006**

The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe working group reports its results. A Somali working group is formed.

#### **Conclusions**

- ▶ Develop partnerships between families, schools, and communities that nurture children and allow them to develop their full potential.
- ▶ To enhance early learning, view children holistically— as members of families and communities and as participants in their culture.
- ▶ Take an asset-based view of ethnic communities from *their* perspective in order to both build upon and leverage those assets for school-readiness.
- ▶ Include researchers and academicians of color, across disciplines, in state and national dialogues on early childhood education.

## The Tip of the Iceberg

This graphic, showing the levels of cultural depth, indicates what cultural communities show to the larger society on a daily basis. Most often we only see its tip and are unaware of deeper levels. The Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care Best Practices Project will help families, teachers, and child care providers to better navigate some of the deeper levels for school success.

### THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

#### CULTURAL NORMS THAT ARE EASILY VISIBLE AND UNDERSTOOD

Members of society have some awareness of different cultures. We might know of holidays or famous people within a cultural group.

#### LESS UNDERSTOOD CULTURAL NORMS

When members of different cultures are present in the dominant society, whether in the workplace, at school, or during leisure, the rest of society observes and learns. Society has the opportunity to listen and understand more deeply when members of these cultural communities share their beliefs and practices.

#### INSIDE FAMILY AND CULTURAL LIFE

There are aspects of family and cultural life that are very difficult for members of most of society to know about unless they are guided. These aspects include generations of cultural traditions, the foundation of social networks, and the knowledge assets of a community. Within this web of relationships, children are nurtured, challenged, and encouraged to succeed.

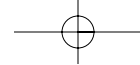
► Eliminate excessive and inappropriate competition between FFN caregivers and licensed caregivers by developing and promoting business models in which FFN caregivers and licensed caregivers work as partners rather than competitors.

#### NEXT STEPS

► Create appropriate curricula, tools, and other materials. Make them available to families, teachers, and child care providers in partnership with cultural communities and their institutions, businesses, universities, and networks

and associations of educators and child care providers.

► Continue to work with state agencies to develop systems to support FFN care with the active participation of diverse communities.



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