

## MCEA Early Education Issues Survey Report –January 2010

### Background Information:

A survey was drafted in response to legislative issues that surfaced during the 2009 session. The survey remained open for approximately three and half weeks and 133 surveys were completed. Enrollment in programs completing the survey was 16,038. The enrollment for School Readiness on a statewide basis is approximately 32,000.

Some individuals reported difficulties with their survey being accepted primarily due to browser settings on individual computers that were blocking pop up warnings and help windows in the survey tool. We also utilized regional volunteers to send reminders to school districts and peers to improve the return rate on the survey. Generally this worked well and will serve as something the Association can build on in the future.

### Preliminary Results:

1. School districts responding: 44 metro school districts and 89 out state districts
2. Community Education Departments supervise programs funded with School Readiness aid in 84% of the school districts. Superintendents, principals and curriculum directors were the positions that were most commonly named as supervising School Readiness programs in the other districts.
3. Licensed teachers are used in 98% of the districts and 90% of the districts report using only licensed teachers in School Readiness. When asked what impact a license requirement would have on the School Readiness program 74% responded that there would not be any impact and 17% indicated that a license requirement would increase their costs and reduce programs.
4. Fees are charged in 95% of the programs.
5. Early Childhood Special Education places children in 90% of the programs.
6. School districts report use their School Readiness funding to support their own program in 90% of the surveys.
7. School Readiness programs receive funding support from other agencies or programs in 54% of the districts.
8. School Readiness aid is used for scholarship funding to place children in other school district programs by 60% of those reporting.
9. School districts report providing a separate fee for service preschool program in addition to their School Readiness program in 33.3% of the surveys.
10. The most frequently reported program designs for School Readiness were the two-day a week program (90% reporting) followed by a three-day a week program (79% reporting) and the one day a week program (61%). The programs were meeting 30 to 33 weeks.
11. The number of children receiving 12 hours of service or more per week was 3,644. Minneapolis and St. Paul comprised 2,200 of these enrollments. When districts responded to the question of "How many children receive 12 hours or more of service per week?" The most common response by districts was zero with 70% of the school districts reporting having less than 5 students in their program receiving 12 hours or more of service per week.
12. When districts were asked an open-ended question about the impact a 12 hour per week requirement would have on the districts School Readiness program the most common responses were: serve fewer children (85), funding concerns (63), lack of space (45), tuition increases (28), increased cost of scholarships (18), lack of staff (15).
13. Districts felt there would be a dramatic impact on enrollments in their School Readiness programs if all funding would be directed to programs providing 12 hours or more per week. Nearly 60% reported they would anticipate declines in School Readiness enrollments that would be 50% or greater. Enrollment declines exceeding 30% were expected in 89% of the School Readiness programs if they were forced to provide only a 12-hour per week option to families.
14. When asked if there would be a quality early education programs available to parents for 12 hour per week in their community if a parent chose to enroll their children 62% said yes.

15. Districts were asked if they would be willing to enter into partnership agreements with other early education providers to reach a 12-hour per week threshold and 52% indicated that they would be willing to do so.
16. There was a proposal in the 2009 legislative session to blend the School Readiness statute and ECFE statute. Those responding to the survey were asked their opinion of this proposal. The responses fell into two primary categories: many liked the flexibility this could provide (67 responses) with the second most common response being both programs are good programs and good statutes let's just fund them properly (49 responses)
17. Districts indicated if they had more money they would serve additional at risk students, provide transportation and increase instructional hours.
18. Survey respondents were asked what they considered to be important considerations in a quality rating system (number of responses in parenthesis): practical, useable, serve a purpose (58 responses), reflect varied settings (54), professional staff (32), appropriate curriculum (29), assessment of outcomes (28), early childhood indicators (17), partnership with parents (12).