

Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF) in a Minute

MELF Research Projects

The MELF is a non-profit organization looking at how early childhood services prepare children for kindergarten. Many different programs across the state are helping MELF answer important questions about early care and education.

What are these MELF projects all about?

Why focus on early learning?

Early experiences in life set the stage for how children learn for the rest of their lives. To be ready for Kindergarten, young children need high quality care at home and in child care. This is true for even very young infants. MELF wants to learn more about what works best to get young children in Minnesota ready for school.

Why is the research needed?

For something as important and expensive as our children's early care and education, we must base our decisions and what we do on facts – not guesses. This research will help us do that.

How will MELF know what is working?

Getting children ready for school means many things. We will look at children's learning and overall development. We also want to know what parents, child care providers, and communities need in order to support children's learning. Together this information will tell us how to best prepare children for success in school.

How will findings from MELF evaluations be used?

Information will be used to guide decisions about what early care and education should look like in Minnesota. Information that can be used to identify individual children, parents, and providers will not be shared outside the evaluations.

Who are the MELF researchers?

Child Trends, SRI International, Wilder Research, and the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) at the University of Minnesota are all helping MELF answer questions across many different projects. CEED can answer questions you may have about the research: 612-625-3058.

Can I see the research findings?

Yes. The MELF website – www.melf.us – will have regular updates.

Does MELF do anything besides research?

MELF and its partners have developed a rating tool called Parent Aware to help parents select high quality early care and education programs. In addition, MELF provides scholarships to help parents in specific areas enroll their children in those programs. More information is available at www.melf.us.

What are the MELF projects?

MELF is funding four primary initiatives:

- 1) **St. Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program:** MELF is providing scholarships for children in certain parts of St. Paul to attend high quality childcare centers and preschool programs.

Information about how well the scholarships help children get ready for school will be collected in the evaluation.

- 2) **Quality Rating System (Parent Aware):** Parent Aware is a tool to help parents find and select from high quality early care and education programs. Information about how well Parent Aware helps programs to improve services to children and families will be collected in the evaluation.
- 3) **Innovation Grants:** MELF has funded nine projects in Minnesota to find out what types of early care and education programs work best to help children get ready for school. These projects include Anoka County Healthy Start, Autism Society of Minnesota, Bloomington MELF Preschool, Head Start, Joyce Preschool, St. Paul Public Schools, Wilder Family Literacy, Suburban Family Resource Collaborative, and Parents as Teachers. Information will be gathered about how well these projects help children to get ready for school during the evaluations of the innovation grants.
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WILDER RESEARCH, CHILD TRENDS, SRI INTERNATIONAL,
AND CENTER FOR EARLY EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT,
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA.

Our motto: “We will listen carefully, be respectful, protect privacy and use what we learn to improve early learning opportunities for all Minnesota children.”