Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF)

Private foundation intending to:
- Improve access, information and program quality for families with young children
- Recommend cost-effective strategies for preparing children to succeed in school

www.melf.us

Purpose

- Establish theoretical foundation of, and theory of change for, large-scale evaluation initiative focused on parent engagement and school readiness
- Provide coherence across disparate school readiness evaluations
- Guide design and measurement decisions

Four foundational documents created
1. Conceptual framework
2. Initiative-wide evaluation questions
3. Shared measurement model
4. Taxonomy of Early Childhood Program Elements (see Godber, Kovan, Susman-Stillman, & McConnell, 2009)

Research Questions

Communities:
- How have MELF-funded programs:
  - improved their local communities’ abilities to sustain quality early childhood education programs
  - contributed to the knowledge of best practices in early childhood education as defined by the MELF Program Taxonomy?

Children and Families:
- To what extent are low-income children in MELF-funded projects on a developmental trajectory towards school readiness or ready for school as measured by a range of child assessment tools?
- To what extent do low-income families served by MELF-funded programs and initiatives have access to and make use of:
  - the resources available to them to help their children be ready for school
  - the information available to them regarding the quality of early care and education programs?

Programs:
- To what extent are MELF-funded programs:
  - meeting criteria for innovative, effective, high-quality programs
  - more cost-effective than others in achieving similar results?

Other MELF partners: