Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care
Best Practices:
A Report to Ready 4K

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

Betty Emarita

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Executive Summary

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.

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 early 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 use 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.

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, child care 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.

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

**Learning from Families: How Best Practices were Identified**

Focus groups were convened and interviews conducted in five cultural communities: African American, Hmong, Latino-Mexican-Chicano, the Mille Lacs Band of the Ojibwe and Somali. The purpose of the interviews and focus groups was to identify 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 rearing, young children who do well in school. The focus groups and eight 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.

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.

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 five cultural communities with which we wanted to communicate.

The task of the five cultural working groups was to develop a first draft of best practices related to Minnesota’s Early Learning Standards. Each working group included at least one person: who was well-grounded in child development or education and assessment theory; one person who had extensive experience in FFN care; and, one person who was steeped in wisdom of the cultural group.

**Aligning Best Practices with Minnesota’s Early Learning Standards**

The consensus of each of the working groups—African American, Hmong, Latino-Mexican-Chicano, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, and Somali—is summarized in 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. Each of the six domains has 21 components and a total of 98 indicators.

For each domain, an example is given which illustrates the skills and abilities families are teaching, including those tracked by some of the indicators within a subset of the components of that domain. Following the example are our learnings about what best practices families are using to teach those skills and abilities.

The examples are composites of experiences and observations relayed in interviews, focus groups, and informal conversations. They illustrate the ways in which skills, capacities, assets, 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 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 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 decision-makers.

In contrast, the examples show how many families of color do not so closely associate formal education or the ability to perform well in school 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 with peers and intergenerational interactions.

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

**Envisioning the Future: Learnings and Recommendations**

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 S. 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—African American, Hmong, Latino-Mexican-Chicano, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and Somali—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.*

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

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*In the early 1990s, John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey (1990; 1993) published a series of papers on emotional intelligence. 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:
1. The capacity to accurately perceive emotions.
2. The capacity to use emotions to facilitate thinking.
3. The capacity to understand emotional meanings.
4. The capacity to manage emotions.
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.

The Early Learning Standards 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.

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 cultural 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

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 nonprofit 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 (ECFE), and the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network in addition to its own network of providers.

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 on-line 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.
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How Culturally Diverse Families Teach Their Children to Succeed and How Early Education Systems Can Learn from Them

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Acknowledgements

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.

This project has taken me on an incredible journey, and I would like to thank some of the people who walked with me. My thanks to Candi Aubid, Marisol Chiclana Ayala, Atum Azzahir, Barb Benjamin-Robertson, Sameerah Bilal-Roby, Dr. Zha Blong Xiong, Mary K. Boyd, Meghan Brown, Dr. Richard Chase, Dr. Yvonne Cheek, Dr. Reatha Clark King, Dr. Betty Cook, Dr. Jackie Copeland-Carson, Nafisa Farah, Farah Hussein Gedle, Dr. Priscilla Gibson, Lois Gunderson, Mariam Hassan, Zainab Hassan, Sharon Henry-Blythe, Abdullahi Ibrahim, Ayan Ismail, Carla Jacobson, Mary Margaret Jung Reagon-Montiel, Jesse Kao Lee, Kazoua Kong-Thao, Jane Kreitzmann, Nancy Latimer, Chris Leath, Lisa Lissamore, Rose Lobley, Ruth Mayden, Fatuma Mohamed, Wenda Moore, Sam Moose, Gabriela Ortega, Vangeline Ortega, Molly O’Shaunessy, Barb O’Sullivan, Dru Osterud, Patricia Ray, Dr. Michael Rodriguez, Rebecca Rojas, Nina Sazer O’Donnell, Dahir Sheikhali, Joycelyn Shingobe, Milissa Silva-Diaz, Deb Swenson-Klatt, Vicki Thrasher-Cronin, Lyfue Vang, Sao Vang, Terry Vasquez, Elsa Vega Perez, Yee Yang, Barb Yates, and to Family and Children Services. I would also like to thank the Bush Foundation, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the General Mills Foundation for their generous support.
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.

In 2003, with support from the McKnight Foundation and the nationally-funded Build Initiative, Ready 4 K convened a year-long series of meetings with partners such as the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network, Head Start, Minnesota Early Childhood Family Education, Child Care Works, and other stakeholders. The result was a “road map” for an early care and education system. This “Road Map for School Readiness” outlined a plan for fine tuning existing systems, filling gaps, and developing new pathways so that no matter what form of early care and education families choose—from family, friend, and neighbor care to center-based care—children would have access to high quality early learning experiences. The Minnesota Department of Education and the Department of Human Services were important participants in this work.

At the same time, Ready 4 K initiated the Minnesota School Readiness Business Advisory Council, now Minnesota Business for Early Learning (MnBEL). MnBEL has evolved into an independent organization, chaired by Al Stroucken, CEO of the Minnesota-based H.B. Fuller Company, with staffing and support provided by Ready 4 K. MnBEL includes nearly two hundred CEOs, senior executives, and business leaders from over a hundred Minnesota companies. Ready 4 K’s efforts in collaboration with MnBEL resulted in the creation of the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF), a public/private partnership to support best practices and accountability in early care and education. Local foundation and corporate support provided $2.5 million to MELF which is now matched by additional corporate, foundation, and
private funds. MELF will identify and support ways to deliver sound and cost-effective early care and education to Minnesota’s children who need it most.

Ready 4 K’s guiding philosophy is that families are the first and most important teachers for their children. We believe that families, given access to information, can make the best decisions for their children. The Ready 4 K Minnesota Road Map for School Readiness asserts that school readiness is about:

- **Relationships**—Strengthening nurturing relationships among parents, caregivers, and children.
- **Quality**—Strengthening the quality of all early learning settings to ensure that children are ready for school.
- **Resources and Accountability**—Implement effective strategies and be accountable for results.

A new and visionary course is being charted for the early care and education of Minnesota’s children—with families, foundations, the business sector, public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and a cross-section of citizens working together.

**Creating Continuity for Children**

Minnesota demographics are changing. While the adult population above fifty-five years of age is overwhelmingly Euro-American, primarily of German and Scandinavian heritage, twenty percent of the population of children under five-years-old is composed of children of color. Minnesota has one of the largest Hmong populations in the U.S., a dramatically increasing Latino population, the largest urban American Indian population in the U.S., and a rapidly growing population of people of African descent, including African Americans. While these changes are most pronounced in Minneapolis and St. Paul, significant demographic shifts can also be seen in smaller towns and rural areas.

An assessment of a statewide sample of kindergarten students found that a disturbing number of children of color were not proficient in skills they were expected to have when entering kindergarten. As with similar assessments in other states, low levels of proficiency were associated with children from families with lower levels of education and low incomes.

In the fall of 2004, to clarify state expectations of pre-kindergarten children, the Minnesota Department of Education in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Human Services released the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota’s Early Learning Standards. This important tool affects teacher education, and professional development for child care providers and parent educators. It can also influence classroom instructional strategies and assessments.

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 observation-based indicators which describe the skill or ability children are expected to demonstrate.

Advocacy for early care and education has raised public awareness about the low proficiency performance of children of color who are entering kindergarten, and its association with low-income parents who have 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 cultural 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 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 cultural 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 matched patterns and recognized 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 cultural communities did not know that embedded within the complex social skills they teach 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.

**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 early 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-Mexico-Chicano,* the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, and Somali. It seeks to identify practices that families use 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.

For families in these cultural communities, FFN care represents a significant collective investment in their children to enable them to improve their chances for success in the world; and, in turn, help others. While this investment is fueled by emotional bonds to the child, it is also viewed as an obligation to both the family and society-at-large. These ideas can be seen in many extended families, and in the clan system of some cultural

*Includes North, South, and Central American, Caribbean, and Southern European cultural influences.
groups. Called “giving back” among African Americans, “ua siab dawb thiab siab day” among the Hmong, and “devolver a la comunidad” among Latinos, this network of collective responsibility and reciprocity for the common good is the underpinning of the warmth, vibrancy, and generosity that so often distinguish these communities. Far more than a simple exchange, it is a spiritual expression of what it means to be human. This collective investment in children has, not only formed the basis of community, but also has generated the community’s advancement—even in the most dire circumstances. For example, at the end of the Civil War, very few African Americans had any education at all. In states where people of African descent were enslaved, education for them was a criminal offense and could be punished severely. According to data collected by the National Center for Educational Statistics in 120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait, by 1900 one-third of African Americans and other nonwhites were enrolled in school. Between 1900 and 1960, enrollment rates increased approximately 7% to 13% every decade.

In these cultural communities there also are many anecdotal stories of low-income parents with little formal education, whose high-achieving children have advanced and professional degrees. In extended families, there are many examples of older siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins, with great ability and low levels of formal education, who encourage younger relatives, and pool their resources to educate them.

The ability to interact well within family and community networks means access to financial and social resources, including knowledge and information. It also can provide insurance against adversity. Nor is it simply a matter of connecting with people who have money and status. These networks include the full range of people within an extended family or clan. The talents and liabilities of all are included and, in the strongest examples, balanced.

Because the skills to interact within these multi-layered networks are so important, they are valued as much as formal education. People who are formally educated, but who do not understand how to interact with community networks are considered “lost.” Community “elders,” “mothers,” “grandfathers,” and “grandmothers” who may not be formally educated, but who have contributed to and helped maintain these networks are greatly revered.

Families in the cultural communities on which we focused strive first to teach children these high-priority, highly-nuanced social skills. A wide variety of academic skills are embedded within them. Many families feel that purely academic skills can be added later, and when they are, they will be properly understood and better utilized through this rich and complex cultural/social lens.

Not only do families teach their children how to navigate within these social networks, they also teach them how to navigate outside of them—in the dominant culture. For cultural communities in which English is a second language, these skills may also be taught by older siblings and cousins, because their English skills give them a clearer understanding of how to navigate the dominant culture. Every cultural community may teach a different set of skills, depending upon how that group is received by the dominant culture.

There are significant differences in how the dominant culture generally treats each cultural group, and hence differences in the skills children need to navigate. For example, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
families must prepare their children to hear hurtful and offensive misinterpretations of historic events from school authority figures and to keep their sense of self and pride in identity intact. African American families must prepare their children to remain confident in their abilities when they see so many black children in special education classes and so few in gifted and talented classes. While these navigation skills are important to all children, they are especially important to children who must overcome additional challenges such as class, racial, or cultural biases.

**Project Goals**

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 the Minnesota’s Early Learning Standards.
3. Make the information available to families, child care 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.

**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. For a list of Advisory Council members, see Appendix A.

Working groups were formed in each of the five cultural communities—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 Minnesota Early Learning Standards. Each working group included at least one person: who was well-grounded in child development or education and assessment theory; one person who had extensive experience in FFN care; and, one person who was steeped in the wisdom of the cultural group.

The groups were self organized, with one person taking the lead. The African American group was lead by Atum Azzahir, Executive Director, Powderhorn Phillips Cultural Wellness Center and former Robert Woods Johnson Community Heath Leadership Award recipient, and Mary K. Boyd, former Assistant Superintendent, Ramsey County School District and President and CEO, MKB and Associates; the Hmong working group by Dr. Zha Blong Xiong, Assistant Professor, University of Minnesota; the Latino-Mexican-Chicano working group by Dr. Michael Rodriguez, Associate Professor, University of Minnesota; the Mille Lacs working group by Mr. Sam Moose, Commissioner of Human Services for the Mille Lacs Band; and the Somali working group by Dr. Farah Hussein Gedle, former Dean, College of Education, University of Somalia.

The working groups 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. Additional support for the interviews and focus groups was provided by the Child Care and Early Education Finance Project of the Greater Minneapolis Day Care Association and by the Collaboration for the Development of Children of African Descent.

The purpose of the interviews and focus groups was to identify 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 rearing, young children who were doing well in school. 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 in which additional examples of ways children demonstrate skills and abilities in the domains of the Early Learning Standards were collected.

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.

Several common themes emerged across the first two sets of interviews and focus groups:

1. Extended family plays a major role in rearing successful children. FFN care recognizes and supports the role of extended family, reinforcing such values as trust, cooperation, reciprocity, and shared responsibility.

2. The ability of children to learn important, highly-nuanced social skills is the most important aspect of early learning and the foundation for other types of achievement. For many cultural communities, these social skills are rooted in spiritual values.

3. Older siblings and cousins play a critical role in teaching young children.

4. Families want children to retain their home culture, to be proficient in navigating the dominant culture, and to be exposed to other cultures.

5. Families value education, promote it in a variety of ways and are frustrated when formal education alienates children from their culture.

6. Most families rely upon rich family and community traditions and practices that produced positive results in the past. Many families from different cultural communities and the people who work with them have limited exposure to formal asset-based information on child development relating to their particular culture. It is not readily available to them. Although some of this research exists, it is
not often tapped by child development experts.

Certain themes had a greater impact on some cultural groups than others:

1. English proficiency is a major barrier to the full engagement of immigrant extended families in their children’s education, and children are thus unfairly penalized. Organizations that serve as cultural intermediaries are important sources of information and access.

2. While racism affected all groups, its impact was most strongly felt by American Indian and African American families.

In general, the themes that emerged from the focus groups and interviews indicate great attention is placed upon spiritual values of what it means to be human—to have a collective sensibility that connects a person to family, community, other humans, and to life itself. These include highly-nuanced social skills, awareness of the environment, keen observation, and the ability to stay focused in complex environments in which many activities take place simultaneously. Although these capacities require advanced cognitive skills, few of them are captured by instruments that are currently used to measure children’s development. At a national symposium organized by the Columbia University Center for Children in Poverty in November 2005, it was noted that most assessment tools are adapted from instruments developed to assess the impact of center-based care. More work needs to be done to develop appropriate instruments and measures that capture developmental capacities for children in FFN care.

Aligning Best Practices with Minnesota’s Early Learning Standards

Minnesota’s Early Learning Standards consist of 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 are broken into 21 components with a total of 98 indicators (see Appendix B). For each of the five cultural communities, there is an example of every domain.

After each domain, are listed its components, followed by a summary of the working group consensus and an example 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 of the relevant indicators in that domain and the components under which they are found. The indicators are taken from Minnesota’s Early Learning Standards for children ages 3 to 5.

Aspects of an example can be related to several domains, components, and indicators. For purposes of illustration, however, we are relating them 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...
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 relayed in interviews, focus groups, and informal conversations. They illustrate the ways in which skills, capacities, assets, and values are embedded in FFN care. The children they describe range in ages from 2 to 5. Some of the examples show younger children demonstrating skills expected in older children. They are included because families are teaching skills based upon their children’s capacities and interests, family and cultural values, and the needs of the family, rather than focusing strictly upon chronological age.

These examples also show how values and family and community structures reflected in FFN care can come into conflict with assumptions embedded in 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 lost on much of the general public, educators, and decision-makers.

In contrast, the examples show how many families of color do not closely associate formal education or the ability to perform well in school 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

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**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!*

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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 with peers and in intergenerational interactions.

While preliminary best practices are listed for each cultural 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.


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 convey 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.
Best Practices: A View

African American Working Group, Interviews, and Focus Groups

DOMAIN: Social and Emotional Development

Components:
Emotional Development
Self-Concept
Social Competence and Relationships

Summary: Examples of this domain in many families revolve around learning through varied interactions with different people—mostly in extended family networks. Children are taught primarily by example. Skills in this domain are viewed as the foundation for other skills. Important themes include the ability to function on many levels simultaneously—mentally and emotionally, direct experience, incorporating physical and emotional contact, awareness of other people and of one’s surroundings, and learning to discern verbal and nonverbal cues.

Example: Jamal, age three, lives with his mother, Nieta, Grandmother Carol, Grandfather George, his Aunt Gwen and Uncle Malik. Nieta keeps Jamal during the day, and he stays with his grandmother, grandfather, aunt, and uncle in the evening. Gwen is in college, and Malik is about to graduate from high school. The house is always full of people, and Jamal confidently moves from lap to welcoming lap as he chooses. Gwen’s best friend, Barbara, has a little boy, Xavion, who is the same age as Jamal. Xavion frequently spends the night. When Jamal’s dad picks him up to visit his other grandmother, Grandma Reatha, Xavion usually goes too. They laugh when Jamal’s dad slings them over his shoulders or tosses them in the air. They know they must settle down when they get to Grandma Reatha’s house. She will have milk and sweet potato pie waiting for them, but she doesn’t allow rough play in her house.

Both Jamal and Xavion love to spend time with Malik—especially when his friends are over. They play wrestle, listen to music, sing and play ball outside when it’s warm. When Malik has chores to do, his friends pitch right in, and they let Jamal and Xavion help too.

Jamal and Xavion know they must behave differently around Grandma Carol, Grandma Reatha and their friends than they do around Malik and his friends. They call Grandma Carol’s two sewing circle friends “Miss Alice” and “Miss Bey-Bey.” And Grandpa George makes sure that Jamal and Xavion always shake hands with his friends when they come in. Grandma Reatha explains they should always call adults “Ms.” or “Mr.,” let them sit first when there is an empty chair, and not interrupt when adults are talking. Grandma Carol says they have to learn proper respect or they won’t get far in life. She tells them they must know how to behave, because when they go out of the house they are representing themselves and their family.
Best Practices
- Families are shaping children’s identities as active members of a family, a community, and a culture.
- Families are exposing children to a variety of people who both affirm and correct them in a safe environment.
- Families are showing children how to learn and discern in groups.
- Families are showing children how to understand authority, social hierarchies and to apply the appropriate rules for the appropriate settings.

Indicators

**Emotional Development**
Begin to understand and respond to others’ emotions.

**Social Competence and Relationships**
Begin to understand others’ rights and privileges.

**DOMAIN: Approaches to Learning**

**Components:**
- Curiosity
- Risk-Taking
- Imagination and Invention
- Persistence
- Reflections 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.
**DOMAIN: Language and Literacy Development**

**Components:**
- Listening
- Speaking
- Emergent Reading
- Emergent Writing

**Summary:** In many families, early language and literacy development are skills embedded in practical tasks that contribute to the well-being of the child or the family.

**Example:** Adair, age two, lives with her mother who works second shift, overtime when it is available, and occasional odd jobs at home. Adair is confident, outgoing, and gregarious. Her mother cares for her during the day, and her father cares for her at night while her mother works. Although Adair’s mother and father are separated, they live in the same apartment building.

When Adair’s mom brings groceries home, Adair helps put them away. Her mother has set up her kitchen so Adair can, with permission make snacks for herself when she is hungry. Adair knows how to open the refrigerator and that the bottom drawer is her snack drawer. Her mother buys small containers of yogurt and stores them on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator. Although Adair’s mother buys an assortment of yogurts, Adair prefers strawberry and always chooses it first. Only after it is gone will she select other flavors. Adair is also able to distinguish her favorite brand from others.

Adair’s spoon, cup, and a few containers are in her special, low-cabinet drawer. When she wants a snack, Adair takes the yogurt from the refrigerator’s bottom shelf, gets her spoon from her special drawer, opens the yogurt, sits at her small table and eats—feeding herself.

**Best Practices**
- Families are teaching children to trust their ability to make their environment work for them.
- Families are teaching children that they can use information they learn to make practical decisions.
- Families are teaching children that resourcefulness can overcome barriers.
- Families are embedding literacy skills in daily routines and tasks.

**Indicators**

**Speaking**
Communicates needs, wants, or thoughts, through non-verbal gestures, actions, expressions, and/or words.

**Emergent Reading**
Show beginning understanding of concepts about print.

**DOMAIN: Creativity and the Arts**

**Components:**
- Creating
- Responding
- Evaluating

**Summary:** In many families, art—especially music—is simply part of life. Creating, responding, and evaluating happens on a daily basis.

**Example:** Music is a significant part of four-year-old Marcus’ life. It is always playing in the car, at home on the CD player, and on the radio. Marcus loves music and he joins his mother and her friends when they dance. They show Marcus new steps and tell him what a good dancer he is. Sometimes they pick Marcus up and dance with him. Or they form a circle around him, clap with the rhythm, and cheer him on, “Go Marcus! Go Marcus!”
Marcus’ mother is a member of her church gospel choir. Not only does Marcus go to church with her, but he goes to every choir rehearsal. Marcus knows many of the songs and sings along with the choir. Marcus frequently asks his mother to sing his favorite song with him. He also makes up songs which he sings when he is playing by himself.

**Best Practices**
- Families are teaching children that creativity is part of everyday life.
- Families are teaching children that creating is both an individual expression and something that can be shared with and supported by others.
- Families are teaching children that movement and spontaneity are part of enjoying life.

**Indicators**

**Responding**
Show others and/or talk about what they have made or done.

**Evaluating**
Share experiences, ideas, and thoughts about art and creative expression.

**DOMAIN: Cognitive Development**

**Components:**
- Mathematical and Logical Thinking
- Scientific Thinking and Problem-Solving
- Social Systems Understanding

**Summary:** In many families, value is placed upon doing what is necessary—setting the table, helping a younger sibling to dress or behave correctly—for the good of the whole. Children are expected to see, assess, and contribute to doing what is necessary. Cognitive development takes place within this context.

**Example:** Two-year-old Jayland lives in a household of eight people—his grandmother and grandfather, his mother, two aunts and two uncles. His grandmother told Jayland that everyone in the house has to have a job to help out, and she has a special job for him.

Jayland’s job is to pick up any shoes left lying on the floor and put them on the low shelf near the front door.

Jayland loves his job. He collects the frequently-scattered shoes and carefully matches them. Even though some of the shoes are quite similar in color, design, or size, Jayland never gets them confused.

**Best Practices**
- Families are teaching children that they must learn skills to contribute to the well-being of the family.
- Families are teaching children that their skills are valued, appreciated, and necessary.
- Families are teaching children that age is not a barrier to learning and doing things well.
- Families are embedding mathematical skills in daily routines and tasks.

**Indicators**

**Mathematical and Logical Thinking**
**Number Concepts and Operations**
Demonstrate beginning ability to combine and separate numbers of objects.

**Measurement**
Make comparisons between at least two groups of objects.
DOMAINE: Physical and Motor Development

Components:
Gross Motor Development
Fine Motor Development
Physical Health and Well-Being

Summary: In many families, the integration of mind, body, and spirit is highly valued. Children are expected to be joyfully active, to have a keen sense of their bodies and their minds, and to physically interact with their surroundings within the context of what is appropriate.

Example: Simone is five and her sister Alisya is four. They do everything together. When Simone graduated to a bigger bike without training wheels, Alisya wanted her old bike—with the training wheels removed. Alisya had never ridden a bike without training wheels and she was afraid. Simone decided that she would teach her. After about an hour, Alisya came back into the house, proud and happy. She was riding the bigger bike without the training wheels.

Their mother asks Simone how she taught Alisya to ride the bike so quickly. Simone explains, “I just told her to say over and over, ‘This bike is just like my old bike. This bike is just like my old bike. This bike is just like my old bike.’”

Best Practices
- Families are teaching children that bodies and minds are integrated and work together.
- Families are teaching children that controlling their mind is an important ability to master.
- Families are teaching children that the mind controls the body.

Indicators

Gross Motor Development
Develop body strength, balance, flexibility, and stamina.

Develop ability to move their body in space with coordination.
Hmong Working Group, Interviews, and Focus Groups

DOMAIN: Social and Emotional Development

Components:
Emotional Development
Self-Concept
Social Competence and Relationships

Summary: Examples of this domain in many families revolve around learning through complex, highly-nuanced extended family and clan systems, including clear protocols for interacting with elders. These skills and abilities are designed to enhance the unity of the group and collective action. They are also designed to avoid breaches. Important areas of focus include self-control, responsibility of the older for the younger, keen observation, and the ability to contribute to the well-being of the family. Capacities in these areas are the foundation for academic learning.

Example: Yee, age three, lives with his parents, grandparents, two aunts, and four cousins. They are pleased that there are many Hmong living in their neighborhood with close family and clan ties. Yee’s parents and grandparents have lived in the U.S. for eight years, and his aunts for twelve years. Several Hmong families in their neighborhood arrived in the U.S. just this year. Yee’s parents and grandparents speak very little English. His aunts are more proficient, and his cousins speak English fluently. His cousins Neng and Nhia are in high school, and Pa Houa and Soua are in junior high.

Yee’s family are members of the Thao clan. Yee’s family has relied upon the clan a great deal in getting settled in the U.S. When they need information about the complicated American system, there is usually somebody somewhere in the clan with knowledge and experience who can help. Yee’s grandparents are well known and respected by elder members of the clan who knew them in Laos. Family reputation means a lot in the clan—especially when getting assistance from members who are in other states.

Yee learns from his grandparents the proper ways to greet elders and how to behave in their presence. Although they do not have much money, everyone in the household contributes to keeping the house neat and orderly. They often have visitors who are always served food and made comfortable. In the process, Yee is learning how people stay connected to one another, no matter how far away they may live.

Best Practices
- Families are teaching children to understand relationships and social hierarchy, and how to respond to them both.
- Families are teaching children the importance of helping within the family and as part of the family network.
- Families are teaching children that family relationships extend far beyond the household.

Indicators

Emotional Development
Begin to understand and respond to others’ emotions.

Social Competence and Relationships
Begin to understand others’ rights and privileges.
**DOMAIN: Approaches to Learning**

**Components:**
- Curiosity
- Risk-Taking
- Imagination and Invention
- Persistence
- Reflections and Interpretation

**Summary:** Among many families, approaches to learning are embedded in practical tasks. Children are often taught a task by watching an older person who shows them the proper way, and then imitating what they’ve seen with the person standing close by to help and guide them. Focusing and completing what has been started are highly valued.

**Example:** Cheng, age four, loves to watch his uncle Pao repair radios and CD players. Many people bring their broken electronic appliances to him. Cheng sits quietly by the work table and watches everything that Pao does. Sometimes Pao will ask Cheng to hand him a tool. Cheng has learned the names of all the tools his uncle uses. Sometimes he hands his uncle a tool before he even asks for it. With Cheng nearby, Pao often tells other members of the family how pleased he is that Cheng watches so carefully and is learning so much. His uncle tells Cheng that when he is old enough and has learned enough Pao will give him a radio of his own that he can practice on.

**Best Practices**
- Families are teaching children to learn by focusing their attention and observing.
- Families are teaching children to rely upon the guidance of adults.
- Families are teaching children that their persistent efforts will be noticed, appreciated, and rewarded by the elders around them.

**Indicators**

**Curiosity**
Show interest in discovering and learning new things.

**Persistence**
Demonstrate ability to complete a task or stay engaged in an experience.

**DOMAIN: Language and Literacy Development**

**Components:**
- Listening
- Speaking
- Emergent Reading
- Emergent Writing

**Summary:** In many families, early language and literacy development involve learning two languages—Hmong and English. Often English is taught by older children and by watching television with other family members.

**Example:** While Hmong is the language used most in her home, Gao Sheng, age three, is also learning to speak English from her cousins Mai and Ka who are in second and fourth grade. Mai, reads books to Gao in English and teaches her how to pronounce and spell words she learns in school. Ka is showing Gao how to write her name.

Ka has a special notebook in which she keeps many of her best school papers. She sometimes makes up special lessons for Gao and all three play “school.” Ka is always the teacher.

One of Gao’s favorite times of day is when she sits in her grandmother’s lap on the couch, and everyone is watching television—especially the game shows. Most of her family cannot understand many of the words spoken on the shows, but they are learning more of them, and
everyone joins in singing the songs on the commercials.

Gao’s parents are very pleased that she will be able to speak both English and Hmong. They want her to be successful in both worlds.

**Best Practices**

- Families are teaching children to value both their native language and English.
- Families are teaching children to be responsible for those who are younger by helping them learn new tasks, including reading and writing.
- Families are teaching children that wisdom and knowledge is expressed in different languages.

**Indicators**

**Listening**
Listen with understanding to stories, directions, and conversations.

**Emergent Reading**
Recognize and name some letters of the alphabet, especially those in own name.

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**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 festival and other special events. Her great-grandmothers 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 brought 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 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 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.
**DOMAIN: Cognitive Development**

**Components:**
Mathematical and Logical Thinking  
Scientific Thinking and Problem-Solving  
Social Systems Understanding

**Summary:** In many families, cognitive development takes place within the context of practical activities that contribute to the household. Folding laundry, setting tables, keeping the house orderly, caring for younger siblings are all activities in which logical and problem-solving skills are embedded.

**Example:** Tong, Chia and Ka Bao all stay with their grandmother during the day while their parents work. Ka Bao, age four, is the oldest. When their grandmother does laundry, Ka Bao is responsible for sorting and folding their clothes, which her grandmother showed her how to do. She is quite helpful to her grandmother who sometimes doesn’t feel well.

First she sorts the clothes by size so there are three piles. Then she folds the shirts, next the pants, then the underwear and socks. She matches outfits together for each person. The socks are the hardest to match because they are similar sizes, but Ka Bao hardly ever makes a mistake. Her grandmother tells Ka Bao what a good job she does, and she makes sure the rest of the family knows as well.

**Indicators**

**Mathematical and Logical Thinking**

*Patterns and Relationships*

Order or sequence several objects on the basis of one characteristic.

*Measurement*

Make comparisons between at least two groups of objects.

**DOMAIN: Physical and Motor Development**

**Components:**
Gross Motor Development  
Fine Motor Development  
Physical Health and Well-Being

**Summary:** In many families, children are expected to be physically active within the context of what is appropriate, and to be able to carry out basic health and hygiene practices independently.

**Example:** Dee, age three, walked by eight months, was toilet trained before she was two, and fed herself and brushed her teeth by two and a half. There are many young children—siblings and cousins—in her family. Everyone is expected to be neat and clean. Dee is pleased that she knows how to bathe and brush her hair herself, although there is plenty of help from her older sisters if she needs it.

Most of Dee’s family lives in the same apartment building. The children play many games with each other inside and outside, and there is lots of physical contact, but they are only allowed to run and jump outside.

**Best Practices**

- Families are embedding mathematical and problem-solving skills in daily routine and practical tasks.
- Families are teaching children that they have a role to play in contributing to the well-being of the family.
- Families are teaching children to take pride in carrying out their tasks, because others count on them.
- Families are teaching children to notice the needs and feelings of the people around them.
**Best Practices**

- Families are teaching children that they must be responsible for basic self care as soon as possible.
- Families are teaching children that basic self care is a matter of pride.
- Families are teaching children that there are appropriate times and places for different types of physical activity.

**Indicators**

**Physical Health and Well Being**
Participate in a variety of physical activities to enhance personal health and physical fitness.

Demonstrate increasing independence with basic self-care skills.
Latino-Mexican-Chicano* Working Group, Interviews, and Focus Groups

**DOMAIN: Social and Emotional Development**

**Components:**
- Emotional Development
- Self-Concept
- Social Competence and Relationships

**Summary:** Examples of this domain in many families revolve around learning through interactions with a variety of people—mostly in extended family networks. Young children are around adults and older children frequently and are taught primarily by example. Skills for interacting appropriately with people of different ages and in a variety of circumstances are viewed as the foundation for other skills. Important themes include the ability to empathize and understand, to function on many levels simultaneously, awareness of other people and of one’s surroundings, and discerning verbal and nonverbal cues.

**Example:** Luis, age two and a half, is part of a very large family. His mother and father, his mother’s mother and grandparents live together along with his uncle and two cousins. Sometimes other cousins come and stay for a while. His mom says there are always extra potatoes to add to the pot and enough blankets to share.

Luis’ mother and father speak English and Spanish, but most often speak Spanish or Spanglish at home. His grandmother and great-grandparents speak Spanish only. His uncle speaks a little English, and his two cousins, who are ten and eleven, speak Spanish and English.

Everyone loves Luis. There is always a lap for him to sit in. Sometimes he is with his grandmother, and she gives him jobs to help keep the house in order. Other times he is with his great-grandparents, and he has to be a bit quieter. His great-grandmother is frail and doesn’t talk much. His great-grandfather tells Luis stories he learned when he was a boy, and makes him little toys. Luis enjoys playing with his cousins when they get home from school.

There are always lots of people around. Luis is learning how to interact with all of them in a proper way. He never calls adults by their first names, and he understands verbal and nonverbal cues—especially when they come from his father. His father only needs to raise an eyebrow and Luis knows he must behave.

**Best Practices**
- Families are teaching children to understand social hierarchies and to interact appropriately within them.
- Families are teaching children to understand subtle difference in lines of authority and how they are intertwined with personalities and preferences.
- Families are teaching children multiple ways to express ideas and to value both their native language and English.

**Indicators**

**Emotional Development**
Respond to praise, limits, and correction.

**Social Competence and Relationships**
Begin to participate successfully as a member of a group.

*Includes North, South, and Central American, Caribbean, and Southern European cultural influences.*
**DOMAIN: Approaches to Learning**

**Components:**
Curiosity
Risk-Taking
Imagination and Invention
Persistence
Reflections and Interpretation

**Summary:** Among many families, approaches to learning are embedded in practical tasks, inventiveness, and problem-solving. Ingenuity that leads to practical results is valued, and with guidance, children are encouraged to develop their own unique approaches.

**Example:** Marcela, age four, loves to watch her great-grandmother (*abuela*) cook, because she always gets to help. Her *abuela* talks the whole time. Sometimes she talks to the bread as she makes it, encouraging it to rise, or to vegetables as she chops them, or to Marcela. When she makes cakes, she gives Marcela a bowl so she can mix too. Her *abuela* never measures anything and tells Marcela how important it is to look, smell, listen, and feel, so she learns which ingredients like to be together. When it’s time to decorate the cakes, she lets Marcela make her own design. She tells Marcela how beautiful it is, and how much people will enjoy tasting it.

While serving dessert after dinner—including Marcela’s cake—her *abuela* says to the whole family that Marcela is her best assistant, and that she is going to be a talented chef. Everyone cheers and applauds.

**Best Practices**
- Families are teaching children to experiment, innovate, and find their own solutions.
- Families are teaching children to hone their senses and to be respectful of direct experience, guided by someone more knowledgeable.
- Families are teaching children that their innovations will be supported and appreciated by others.

**Indicators**

**Imagination and Invention**
Approach tasks and experiences with flexibility, imagination, and inventiveness.

**Persistence**
Demonstrate ability to complete a task or stay engaged in an experience.

**DOMAIN: Language and Literacy Development**

**Components:**
Listening
Speaking
Emergent Reading
Emergent Writing

**Summary:** In many families, early language and literacy development are skills embedded in practical tasks that contribute to the well-being of the child and the family.

**Example:** Laura is four. Laura’s great uncle Tito lives with her family. Like her older Auntie Maria Elena, her Uncle Tito does not speak English. When he was young he did not have a chance to go to school, but he loves to hear news about the town where he grew up in Mexico. Laura’s older sister, who is twelve, speaks English and Spanish. She reads a newspaper to her Uncle Tito and Auntie Maria Elena from their home town every week. Sometimes they invite friends over to hear. Laura listens, too. And the adults always add interesting things to the stories that are read. That’s Laura’s favorite part!
Laura’s mom says she doesn’t know what she would do without Uncle Tito. He can fix almost anything. He has made many repairs around their apartment when the landlord wouldn’t. Laura wants to read to him too when she gets big enough.

Best Practices

Families are teaching children that they have an important role to play in the well-being of the family.

Families are teaching children that knowledge and intelligence are expressed in many different ways.

Families are teaching children that knowledge and skills are to be shared.

Families are embedding literacy skills in family activities and practical tasks.

Indicators

Listening
Listen with understanding to stories, directions, and conversations.

Emergent Reading
Show beginning understanding of concepts about print.

DOMAIN: Creativity and the Arts

Components:
Creating
Responding
Evaluating

Summary: In many families, art is simply part of life. Creating, responding, and evaluating happen on a regular basis and in ordinary circumstances.

Example: Alita’s two aunts are seamstresses. They work at home, and they always work to music. Alita is four. She and her cousins, Elisa and Isabel, who are six and seven, love to pick up the scraps of fabric from the floor and make doll clothes. Among them, they have four dolls—one for each of them and one that they all share. Sometimes they decorate the clothes they make with buttons, beads, tape, and safety pins. Or they might use ruined stockings and old socks. Alita’s favorite colors are orange and blue. When she has trouble putting pieces together, Elisa and Isabel help her.

Their aunts enjoy looking at their designs and will often show them to friends who visit. Everybody in the family knows that if they have any interesting scraps, bits of ribbon or lace, they should give them to Alita, Elisa, and Isabel.

Best Practices

Families are teaching children that creativity is part of everyday life.

Families are teaching that creativity can be an individual expression and a shared experience.

Families are teaching children that ordinary things can be transformed through imagination.

Indicators

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

Evaluating
Share experiences, ideas, and thoughts about art and creative expression.

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**

**Mathematical and Logical Thinking**

*Patterns and Relationships*

Sort objects into subgroups by one or two characteristics.

**Scientific Thinking and Problem-Solving**

*Investigating*

Make comparisons between objects that have been collected or observed.

**DOMAIN: Physical and Motor Development**

**Components:**
- Gross Motor Development
- Fine Motor Development
- Physical Health and Well-Being

**Summary:** In many families, children are expected to be active, to play vigorously, and to physically interact with their surroundings within the context of what is appropriate.

**Example:** On Sunday afternoons, Miguel, who is three, his father, and his brothers go to the park to play soccer. Miguel’s mom and sister make tortillas and bring juice. Miguel is too little to play in the game, but his brothers kick the ball to him anyway. Although they can only play soccer in the park, Miguel’s brothers make up many other games at home. They pretend wrestle with him, race with him outside the apartment building, and practice their soccer moves. They’ve taught him different ways to kick the soccer ball, and even some of the rules of the game.

**Best Practices**
- Families are teaching children that physical activity is joyful and a natural part of life.
- Families are teaching children that bodies and minds are integrated.
- Families are teaching children that they can trust and learn from older siblings.
Indicators

**Gross Motor Development**
Develop ability to move their body in space with coordination.

**Physical Health and Well-Being**
Participate in a variety of physical activities to enhance personal health and physical fitness.
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
Working Group, Interviews, and Focus Groups

Summaries and examples given by Mille Lacs Elders and parents assisted by Candi Aubid, MSW, LICSW.

DOMAIN: Social and Emotional Development

Components:
- Emotional Development
- Self-Concept
- Social Competence and Relationships

Summary: Sharing, caring, and taking responsibility in family relationships are an important focus. Many families provide cultural opportunities for expression while giving guidance and understanding.

Example: Nindaanis is three and lives with her parents in the American Indian community. Her extended family is very involved in her life and everyone participates in the Ojibwe ceremonies held in the dance hall every spring and fall. Her parents dress little Nindaanis in a ribbon dress for the spring ceremonies. As the afternoon activities take place she socializes in the dance hall. She moves about with a great comfort, knowing that her parents and extended family are close by. At specific times in the ceremonies it is appropriate for children to be quiet and sit while Elders talk or other activities occur. Sometimes Nindaanis boldly steps out of her families reach and they gently guide her back to where they sit. Her dad has an active role in part of the ceremony. Nindaanis wants to be by him even though she should sit with family members.

She ventures over to her Dad and her family guides her back. They respond to Nindaanis in a way that allows her to express her emotions, yet they help her understand she must sit. They are setting limits for her. When she sits and observes they praise her.

Best Practices

- Families are teaching children the importance of sharing with each other.
- Families are teaching children the Ojibwe value of respect and caring for one another.
- Families are teaching children that expression is important, and they can trust being guided and understood.
- Families provide cultural opportunities for children to express themselves and shape their identities.

Indicators

Emotional Development
- Respond to praise, limits, and correction.

Social Competence and Relationships
- Sustain interaction by cooperating, helping, sharing, and expressing interest.
**DOMAIN: Approaches to Learning**

**Components:**
- Curiosity
- Risk-Taking
- Imagination and Invention
- Persistence
- Reflections and Interpretation

**Summary:** Many families teach traditional Ojibwe practices integrated with contemporary approaches to encourage children to explore new ways of learning.

**Example:** *As told by an Elder:* “My granddaughters come over to make cake and bread. It’s an awful mess, but they have to clean up so I let them go ahead. I just tell them what to put in there and what to do. They really use their imagination when they are making things. [One said,] ‘What would it taste like if we put strawberry in there?’ The other one wanted to put in maple. ‘I’ll put both in there,’[she said]. They ate them all. I told them they could have what is left. They play house with it. They set the table, and say, ‘Grandma, its time to have your anibish (tea).’ They don’t like when it gets on their hands. But they have fun doing it and enjoy eating it. I tell them, ‘Now, when you get married, you can show your old man how you can cook.’ And then they are off on another tangent—like school. There is only one grandson in that age group. I tell him that men can cook too. ‘Uncle Steve can cook good.’ ‘Yes, I know. I eat his fry bread,’ [he says]. ‘You can cook too if you want to,’ I told him. ‘I don’t want to,’[he says,] and then out the door he goes. But he comes and eats biscuits and tea with the girls."

**Best Practices**
- Families are teaching children the importance of risk-taking at the same time providing an understanding of limits and boundaries.
- Families are encouraging children to discover new ways of approaching situations.

**Indicators**
- **Curiosity**
  Show interest in discovering and learning new things.
- **Risk-Taking**
  Use a variety of strategies to solve problems.

**DOMAIN: Language and Literacy Development**

**Components:**
- Listening
- Speaking
- Emergent Reading
- Emergent Writing

**Summary:** Listening and responding are deeply valued in Ojibwe customs. Families model these values to their children.

**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…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 significance of listening and enhancing their understanding of Ojibwe teachings.

Families are encouraging interaction that promotes speaking and development of sounds through traditional Ojibwe storytelling and song.

Families are enhancing children’s ability for reading through story time and by modeling its importance.

Indicators

Listening
Listen with understanding to stories, directions, and conversations.

Emergent Reading
Initiate stories and respond to stories told or read aloud.

*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.

DOMAIN: Creativity and the Arts

Components:
Creating
Responding
Evaluating

Summary: Families support children’s creative abilities and welcome opportunities for children to share those gifts.

Example: *As told by a parent:* “When Mathew was three–years-old he started drawing fish. At first it was fish and then sharks. As time went on he got more detailed. The rest of the family was amazed because they were good. He always wanted to do that, so we really encouraged it. We bought him all the stuff—crayons, pencils, and tablets. He would then want to draw dinosaurs. So we started to buy books about dinosaurs and sharks. He wanted to learn about them, so we would read to him. He was obsessed about dinosaurs. He wanted us to try and draw…with him. So we would, because he was so into it. We had an artist from the state fair draw a dinosaur scene with his nickname on the drawing. We posted it in his room. It was really art stuff.

I got him into little league, and he just didn’t like it. The pictures [he drew] showed he just hated it. Art and drawing [were] his thing. At first he just drew a brachiosaurus, but when we bought the books that showed the different species, he started to draw the different species. Then he learned the names of them—like this one was a man-eater, and this one lived in the swamp. So when we bought him books about the different species he really got into it. He began to see the differences in dinosaurs from the books and began to blossom and be creative. He was then able to draw them all even though he was just a little guy.
When he went to kindergarten he would draw and bring things home, but he didn’t seem to draw at school what he drew at home. They were told to draw certain things. However, he didn’t seem as excited to draw a house or those things.”

**Best Practices**
- Families are encouraging children to explore their creative gifts.
- Families are teaching children the importance of sharing their gifts with others.
- Families are encouraging children’s interests and providing support in the process of cultural expression.

**Indicators**

**Responding**
Show interest and respect for the creative work of self and others.

**Evaluating**
Share opinions about likes and dislikes in art and creative expression.

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**DOMAIN: Cognitive Development**

**Components:**
Mathematical and Logical Thinking
Scientific Thinking and Problem-Solving
Social Systems Understanding

**Summary:** Families focus on helping children understand social networks and how to solve problems. They value the importance of relationships with family, kin, clan, and the natural world. The exploration and observation of the natural world is encouraged.

**Example:** When Keenan was two-years-old he was taken to the Sugar Bush in the spring where the family and extended family was making maple syrup and sugar. He was accompanied by two of his paternal aunts that had never been to the sugar bush before. When they arrived Keenan, even though he was young, knew the woods and started to run around this natural and familiar environment. His aunts couldn’t keep up with him. They described Keenan running like a deer in the woods. He showed curiosity and an ability to explore this natural world that had become familiar to him and his family.

**Best Practices**
- Families are modeling the importance of relationships.
- Families are teaching children about the Ojibwe social network.
- Families are encouraging children to explore their natural world with family and community.

**Indicators**

**Scientific Thinking & Problem-Solving**

**Observing**
Use senses to explore materials and the environment.

**Social Systems Understanding**

**Understanding the World**
Identify characteristics of the places where they live and play within their community.

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**DOMAIN: Physical and Motor Development**

**Components:**
Gross Motor Development
Fine Motor Development
Physical Health and Well-Being

**Summary:** Ojibwe culture values being active. Families encourage young children to develop physical skills and abilities.

**Example:** Mireye is 3-years-old and lives with her parents and older brother on the reservation. She likes playing outside with...
her brother. One day they decide to ride their bike and three-wheeler down this hill. Her brother was on a riding toy that sits low to the ground. However, Mireye was riding her bike that sits high off the ground. The hill in the yard is very steep, so her parents had to stop her, and explain that this activity is dangerous. Her parents don’t want to restrict her and want her to explore her environment, but they recognize that they need to set boundaries and explain safety issues to her. Her parents explained to her that she could hit a tree or rock. She likes to watch her older brother who is very active and believes that she can do these things also. Mireye [and her brother] are very active. They like to ride their bikes and go fast. They wear their helmets and kneepads for safety. Their parents watch and allow them to explore.

**Best Practices**

- Families are teaching children the Ojibwe value of physical health and being active.
- Families are encouraging children to explore their environments.

**Indicators**

**Gross Motor Development**
Develop large muscle control and coordination.

Develop body strength, balance, flexibility, and stamina.
Somali Working Group,
Interviews, and Focus Groups

DOMAIN: Social and Emotional Development

Components:
Emotional Development
Self-Concept
Social Competence and Relationships

Summary: Families teach their children about lineage and family relationships at an early age. Children grow up in an extended family environment, and learn to respect others and share space. Among neighboring families, women often gather for evening tea and share stories and information with each other, while children play imaginative games together.

Example: Asha and Ali, who are 3 and 5 years old, live with their parents in Minneapolis. Their uncle and his family visited from Atlanta to spend Eid al-Adha with them. The children were very delighted with their relative’s visit. On the first Eid morning, the family went to the mosque for Eid prayer. The children ate sweets and were given gifts, and enjoyed the morning celebration. Asha told her mother that her best friend, Qamar and her family are not in the mosque and she is concerned about them. Her mother told her that she could call her when she gets home.

When they came home, Asha called her friend, Qamar, and asked her why they didn’t join them at the mosque. Qamar told Asha that her mother is sick and couldn’t come to the celebration. After Asha finished the conversation with her friend, she came back to her mother looking sad, and asked if her family could visit Qamar’s mother and bring Qamar to spend Eid day with her.

The family visited Qamar’s mother and brought Eid gifts to them. Asha asked Qamar’s mother if Qamar could go with them. Then Qamar and Asha’s family all came back together to spend the holiday celebration with the community. The two girls joined their other friends at the community celebration and enjoyed the day together.

Best Practices
- Families are teaching children sharing and respect for others.
- Families are encouraging their children to express their caring and concern for others.
- Families are encouraging their children to develop and maintain friendships.

Indicators
Self-Concept
Begin to develop awareness, knowledge, and acceptance of own gender and cultural identity.

Social Competence and Relationships
Sustain interaction by cooperating, helping, sharing, and expressing interest.
DOMAIN: Approaches to Learning

Components:
Curiosity
Risk-taking
Imagination and Invention
Persistence
Reflections and Interpretation

Summary: In many families, approaches to learning are deeply-rooted in practical tasks. Often children are taught a task by observing an older person, and then by imitating them. Children learn responsibility by performing tasks and contributing to the household chores.

Example: Zahra and her husband, Omar, have four children—three boys and a girl. Zahra works at home as a seamstress. She makes traditional clothing for Somali women. Her children love to watch as she cuts and sews clothes. They’ve learned how the sewing machine works. Her three-year-old son and four-and-a-half-year-old daughter have the responsibility of cleaning up the sewing room. When she needs it, they also hand their mother thread, making appropriate choices. They know which colored threads match each of the dresses.

The children love their tasks because they like to play with the fabric remnants. They try to put them together to make dresses or shirts. Their mother bought plastic scissors for them because they are interested in learning clothing design. Now they easily cut the remnants to make new designs.

Best Practices

Families are teaching children that their persistent efforts are appreciated, and rewarded by their parents.

Indicators

Curiosity
Show interest in discovering and learning new things.

Risk-Taking
Choose new, as well as, a variety of familiar activities.

DOMAIN: Language and Literacy Development

Components:
Listening
Speaking
Emergent Reading
Emergent Writing

Summary: Somali families teach their preschoolers language and literacy skills through poetry, prose, folktales, and children’s stories. They have a strong oral tradition, and they tell stories from their culture as they learned them from their family, clan, and other social networks.

Example: Safia and her husband, Abdinur, have five children from the ages of 1 to 8. Safia did not have a formal education in Somalia, but now she attends English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. Safia is originally from a rural area rich in Somali culture, including traditional childrearing. She sings lullabies in her native language to her infant while she breastfeeds him, when he cries, or when she is getting him to sleep.

She began telling her children Somali folktales when they reached three years of age. The folktales are based on traditional Somali nomadic culture, in which caring for herds of animals is important. The
children love these stories. They want to know what the animals look like, what they eat, and how the people live with the animals in such a small house like theirs. Their parents explain how nomadic people live, and what their environment is like. Their father shows them pictures of animals in a book so they can see exactly how the animals look. They also learn the names of the animals in both Somali and English, which ones are domesticated or wild, and the different sounds the animals make.

The children create a game out of these folktales. They pretend they are different animals. One is the animal herder; one is the hyena; and the others are the herd. The hyena hunts its prey, and the other animals hide. When the hyena catches an animal it makes a sound and that person is eliminated from the game. The game ends when the hyena catches the last animal. Then the children switch roles and the game starts over.

Another family favorite is a word game in Somali. Safia teaches her children some of the words of Somali tongue twisters. Each child repeats two sentences full of repetitive words with very similar pronunciations.

On Saturdays and Sundays, the children go to a special school to learn to recite and write the Koran. The Koran is taught in Arabic. Even though four-year-old Ayan is not old enough for formal schooling, she can already recite the call for prayers, and some verses of the Koran in Arabic.

**Best Practices**

- Families are teaching children their native language, culture, and heritage.
- Families are teaching visual literacy skills and the importance of bilingual education.
- Families are teaching the importance of education for all ages, and responsibility of teaching and assisting others when they need help.
- Families are teaching children the importance of religion and language.

**Indicators**

**Listening**

Listen with understanding to stories, directions, and conversations.

**Emergent Reading**

Begin to associate sounds with words or letters.

**DOMAIN: Creativity and the Arts**

**Components:**

Creating
Responding
Evaluating

**Summary:** Families teach children creativity and art by involving them in the cultural activities associated with weddings, holidays, and other special occasions. Preparations frequently involve designing and decorating. Young children observe and help their families.

**Example:** Henna designing and decorating is an important part of Somali culture. Before holidays, weddings and special occasions, women and their daughters go to the henna decorating shops and design their hands and feet. Young girls frequently ask their mothers to take them when they go to the henna shops.

Before her auntie’s wedding night, five-year-old Haboon went with her mother for henna decoration. She chose her own design from the catalogue, a beautiful butterfly design.

She was so excited when she got back home, she asked her father to take a picture of her hand. Haboon later showed the picture to her friends, and told them all
about her experience at the henna shop. Her friends became so interested that they asked their parents to take them to the henna lady. Haboon and her friends designed their own henna art for their next visit to the shop.

Best Practices
- Families are teaching their children to participate in creative activities.
- Families are teaching children that creativity is a both a shared and an individual experience.
- Families are teaching their children to respect their own creative preferences.

Indicators
Responding
Show others and/or talk about what they have made or done.

Evaluating
Share opinions about likes and dislikes in art and creative expression.

DOMAIN: Cognitive Development

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

Summary: The five daily prayers in which most Islamic Somali families engage provide structure for their day. They offer many opportunities for young children to explore and learn about the sequence of daily life and, in particular, the concept of time. Children learn the time for each prayer and how many times the prayer is recited. This practice requires numerical skills and memorization. It is a complex task for small children, yet most children master it.

Reciting the Koran requires understanding social systems. Most Somali children are multilingual. They speak Somali at home, English in the larger community, and often study Arabic to learn and recite the Koran. This intermix of culture and language helps instill sensitivity to different social systems and ways of being.

Example: Five-year-old Ebyan, wakes up at 6 a.m. every day to join her mother who is already up. She prepares to perform her morning prayers with a ritual cleansing. She has mastered the details of the morning prayers, and often remembers that at noon it is time for the *duhur,* the midday prayers.

One of Ebyan’s responsibilities is to fill the bird feeder with her father’s help. The feeder is filled two or three times in the fall and once in the summer. Ebyan notices birds come constantly in the morning, but irregularly during the rest of the day. She notices that the birds take turns, only one bird feeds at a time, and that each bird flies away quickly. She points out that they come in the daytime but never at night. She notes there are many kinds of birds and that their colors are very different. Ebyan loves watching the birds and talking about what she sees.

Best Practices
- Families are teaching children ways of applying mathematics, patterns, and relationships in practical daily life.
- Families are teaching their children to learn through meaningful observation and repetitive action.
- Families are teaching their children that there are different ways of knowing.

Indicators
Scientific Thinking and Problem-Solving

Observing
Identify and/or describe objects by physical characteristics.

*Questioning*
Express wonder about the natural world.

**DOMAIN: Physical and Motor Development**

**Components:**
Gross Motor Development
Fine Motor Development
Physical Health and Well-Being

**Summary:** The physical development of young children is taken seriously by many Somali families. Much effort is placed on supplying the proper diet and nutrition. Many Somali mothers provide daily wholesome homemade meals for their children. Most Somali parents view play as an integral part of a child’s life—occupying much of the day.

**Example:** Ege and Sayid are the youngest brothers of a family of eight children. They live in a small house along with their siblings of varying ages and their parents. The children are all responsible for an ample amount of housework and caring for younger siblings.

Everyday, they find new ways to be physically active. They play tag, chase each other in the basement, and make endless trips up and down the stairs. They also play outside when an adult is present to supervise them. Their parents encourage wrestling as an important, fun way to exercise.

At meal times Ege and Sayid, along with most of the older siblings, share a large traditional dish, eating with their hands. Everyone is responsible for being respectful—not reaching out to the side of the plate where others are sharing, because that is considered disrespectful. Their parents educate them about the importance of good manners or *adab.*

Each child also takes a natural supplement of honey and black seed to eliminate cold symptoms and prevent viral infections.

**Best Practices**
- Families are providing their children good nutrition for proper physical growth.
- Families are allowing their children to physically utilize and explore play.
- Families are teaching children proper table manners.

**Indicators**

**Fine Motor Development**
Use eye-hand coordination to perform a variety of tasks.

**Physical Health and Well-Being**
Participate in a variety of physical activities to enhance personal health and physical fitness.
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, Latino-Mexican-Chicano, and Somali groups were conducted in the participants’ native language. Over eighty parents or caregivers participated. FCS compiled a report examining the learning styles and parenting practices of each cultural community, as identified by the parents and caregivers who participated. In addition, an urban Mille Lacs Band focus group was organized by Barb Benjamin-Robertson, Executive Director of the Mille Lacs Band Urban Office.

Following are direct quotes from focus group participants. 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 Minnesota’s Early Learning Standards. They offer further evidence of universal practices of good parenting, such as the importance of good communication and modeling positive behavior.

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 the 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 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 f[bed] linen [when it is time to do laundry], and now my three-year-old does it.

MILLE LACS BAND OF THE 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 THE 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-yea- 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-Mexican-Chicano 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 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 the 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 [when I got there], and [he] explained, “Mom, when you arrive you always cook food and eat.”

Latino-Mexican-Chicano 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.

Mille Lacs Band of the Ojibwe 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.

Hmong Parent/Caregiver

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**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 2 ½-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 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. In her article, “Fostering Resilience in Children,” published in *ERIC Digest*, Bonnie Benard, Ph.D., defines resiliency as “a set of qualities that foster a process of successful adaptation and transformation despite risk and adversity.” She says that through resilience children are able to “develop social competence, problem-solving skills, a critical consciousness, autonomy, and a sense of purpose.”

She offers these explanations [emphasis added]:

**Social competence** includes qualities such as responsiveness, especially the ability to elicit positive responses from others; flexibility, including the ability to move between different cultures; empathy; communication skills; and a sense of humor.

**Problem-solving skills** encompass the ability to plan; to be resourceful in seeking help from others; and to think critically, creatively, and reflectively.

**Critical consciousness** [means having] a reflective awareness of the structures of oppression (be it from an alcoholic parent, an insensitive school, or a racist society) and creating strategies for overcoming them…

**Autonomy** is having a sense of one's own identity and an ability to act independently and to exert some control over one's environment, including a sense of task mastery, internal locus of control, and self-efficacy. The development of resistance (refusing to accept negative messages about oneself) and of detachment (distancing oneself from dysfunction) serves as a powerful protector of autonomy.

[A sense of purpose] [requires believing] in a bright future, including goal direction, educational aspirations, achievement motivation, persistence, hopefulness, optimism, and spiritual connectedness.

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 E. 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.

Many families are enveloping their children in these protective factors. 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.*

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.

Masten also listed *protective systems* implicated by the research as supporting the protective factors. These systems include:
- Attachment systems
- Human information processing systems
- Self-regulation systems for attention, emotion, arousal, behavior
- Pleasure-in-mastery motivational system
- Family systems
- Community organizational systems
- Spirituality and religious systems.

Many families have developed these protective systems for their children through extended family networks and community ties. In the same publication, Masten further emphasizes the importance of these systems: “The findings on resilience suggest that the greatest threats to children are those adversities that undermine the basic human protective systems for development.” Those threats and adversities include well-intentioned, but ill-informed policies that undermine the range of early care and education choices available to families, weaken their community and social networks, and reduce the capacity within communities to care for young children.

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 these social networks for school readiness. They have identified the positive impact social networks have on

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*In the early 1990s, John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey (1990; 1993) published a series of papers on emotional intelligence. 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:
1. The capacity to accurately perceive emotions.
2. The capacity to use emotions to facilitate thinking.
3. The capacity to understand emotional meanings.
4. The capacity to manage emotions.*
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 readiness context, they validate the parenting role and reinforce a “parent as first teacher” identity. They also 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 they change parenting and educational involvement norms (See Appendix B).

The Early Learning Standards 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.

Referencing research done by Dr. Samuel Meisels, President of the Erikson Institute, Linda E. Winfield, Ph.D., in her NCREL Monograph: Developing Resiliency in Urban Youth, explains:

“Children's skills and knowledge may be different from those expected by school, but these children are not developmentally delayed, low-ability, and so forth. By equating a child's developmental competence with a particular form of behavior, educators misread the meaning of the child's behavior and are led toward practices that compromise the child’s potential for learning. School policies and classroom instruction must build on and use the knowledge, experiences, mastered skills, and language that children bring to school and connect children’s prior cultural and community knowledge to learning the values, skills, language, and knowledge in the school.”

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.

**Envisioning the Future: Learnings and Recommendations**

**Learnings**

We have four learnings on how to enhance early learning for children from the five cultural communities on which we focused:

1. **To enhance early learning, view children holistically**—as members of families and communities, and as participants in their culture. Although extended families play a major role in the early care and education of young children in many cultural communities, for the most part practices in public and private institutions and agencies have not been adapted to engage them. Often learning opportunities, information, and services target parents rather than families, communities of place, and cultural communities. Yet, these supports—often intertwined—are essential assets in the lives of children. In order to fully integrate these assets into strategies to improve school readiness, they must be better understood by public agencies and incorporated into their delivery strategies. The Minnesota Department of Human Services has taken a significant step in this direction by including FFN caregivers in the services provided by the Child Care Resource and Referral Network.

2. **Take an asset-based view of cultural communities from their perspective** in order to both build on and leverage those assets for school readiness. Diverse viewpoints are needed at every level of discussion leading to school readiness in formulating theory, policies, implementation, data collection, and interpretation. Designing processes that incorporate meaningful participation from cultural minority groups can be challenging, because the decision-making
processes of most public agencies were designed primarily to meet the needs of Euro-Americans when the country was far more homogeneous, and discrimination against people of color was widely accepted.

Typically, minority academicians, researchers, and managers of nonprofits, and community leaders are experiencing higher demands and greater stress with fewer resources than their white counterparts. In addition, they tend to volunteer more time in their communities under more challenging circumstances. In order for them to participate in lengthy discussions and planning processes, their time must be supported through grants or contracts. Although the upfront costs for this process may be higher, the savings over time can be considerable. We will develop more effective policies and practices, because we will have higher quality information, deeper understanding, and more engaged communities.

3. **Include researchers and academicians of color, across disciplines, in state and national dialogues on early childhood education.**

When advocacy organizations, policy makers, and agencies focus too narrowly on the field of child development in shaping policy and practice, it eliminates important asset-based work that is being done by researchers of color in social work, anthropology, psychology, evaluation and assessment, and other disciplines. While the intent may be to bring focus and depth to the conversation, the impact is quite different.

Researchers and academicians of color are often marginalized or excluded from this vital discussion, and the field of child development and early care and education is deprived of their knowledge and experience. Important research is not brought forward and the effects of policy on communities of color are often poorly understood. When there are few opportunities to learn across disciplines, agencies and sectors, unintended consequences can result.

For example, Minnesota has a policy that requires criminal background checks on all household members of a FFN caregiver who receives public subsidies. While the policy is intended to protect the safety and well-being of the child, the impact may be to splinter families. In Hennepin County, 44% of African American men between the ages of 18 and 32 are under some form of correctional supervision. Disparities in treatment of African American men and their white counterparts by the judicial and law enforcement systems have been well documented.

The majority of these crimes are non-violent—unpaid traffic violations, loitering, drinking in public, failure to appear in court. Many happen because of economic circumstances. Depending upon how the policy is implemented, families may have to choose between having a father present or a much needed subsidy.

For Latino households in which there may be an undocumented worker, the situation is much the same. Economically stressed families may have to choose between family ties and financial subsidies.

The long-term financial and social costs of these unintended consequences are astounding. Some of these consequences can be mitigated with the involvement of organizations that are cultural intermediaries. These organizations can give input into regulations and help design procedures and implementation strategies that are both informed and effective. When more people of color with appropriate knowledge and experience can participate in gathering and interpreting information, formulating
policies, and developing implementation strategies, better policies, regulations, and practices can be generated that protect children without devastating the families that support them.

4. **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.

Data show that many families use both FFN care and more formal licensed care. Both occupy a unique and important niche. Both are economic and social necessities. Neither can substitute for the other. Excessive competition between these two forms of early care and education can distort the market place and deprive families of choice. Some advocates of licensed care believe that FFN care is inherently inferior. Some advocates of FFN care believe that children become commodities when they enter licensed care, and that licensed care is one more intrusive step by government in an already over-commercialized society. If either of these polarizing views dominates, children, families, communities, cultural traditions, and our collective future are all the losers.

Fortunately, there are good examples of cooperation and viable partnerships between FFN and licensed caregivers. In Hawaii’s Good Beginnings Alliance’s School Readiness Initiative, children in FFN care can participate in children’s play groups that take place with a licensed child care provider once or twice a week for half a day. While the children play, the FFN caregivers share information with each other and with the licensed provider. The play groups become important learning sessions. The licensed providers find that when families want their children in a more formally structured setting, they are more likely to choose licensed caregivers from the play groups with whom they are familiar. We can learn from this example and others to create models that are tailored to the needs and preferences in Minnesota.

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**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 cultural 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**

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 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, child care providers, and parent educators through the Early Childhood Resource and Training Center (ECRTC), a nonprofit 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 (ECFE), and the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network in addition to its own network of providers.

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 on-line 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 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.ccrc1.org)
6. What resources are available through the local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency in your area? (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

Early Childhood Indicators of Progress:

Minnesota’s Early Learning Standards

**SELF-CONCEPT**
1. Begin to experiment with own potential and show confidence in own abilities
2. Demonstrate increasing self-direction and independence
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
CURIOUSITY
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
REFLECTION 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-second sequence of actions
4. Listen to and recognize different sounds in rhymes and familiar words
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 objects 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
6. Recognize and duplicate simple patterns
7. Sort objects into subgroups by one or two characteristics
8. Order or sequence several objects on the basis of one characteristic
Spatial Relationships/Geometry
9. Identify and name common shapes
10. Use words that show understanding of order and position of objects
Measurement
11. Recognize objects can be measured by height, length, weight, and time
12. Make comparisons between at least two groups of objects
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

* 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. 
Appendix C: What Difference Do Social Networks Make?

With support from the 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 readiness 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, they change parenting and educational involvement norms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Everyone</th>
<th>For Most Vulnerable</th>
<th>Within a School Readiness Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen sense of identity and value</td>
<td>Change sense of self</td>
<td>Value the parenting role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change sense of others/build trust</td>
<td>Reinforce a “parent as first teacher” identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforce norms</td>
<td>Change behaviors</td>
<td>Change parenting and educational involvement norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expand horizons</td>
<td>Align home and school expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change expectations and possibilities/hopes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand social outlets</td>
<td>Reduce stress and isolation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate information flow</td>
<td>Translate (both languages and concepts) information for families.</td>
<td>Help connect parents to quality early childhood setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support social emotional development through children’s group activities</td>
<td>Exchange of parenting and child development information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate resource flow</td>
<td>Provide safety nets and informal supports</td>
<td>Help parents get to and access ECE and health services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help parents find activities and resources to support their educational engagement with their child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer trusting relationships</td>
<td>Expand supportive network; expand access; provide references</td>
<td>Engage parents who have had negative educational experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide referrals for ECE providers, pediatricians, and other key EC resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate collective action</td>
<td>Connect to advocates</td>
<td>Encourage self-initiated ECE resources—e.g., babysitting coops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engage parents as advocates for their children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforce cultural and community identity</td>
<td>Create a sense of cultural connection</td>
<td>Reinforce language and cultural teachings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide multicultural context for family’s own culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ©2005 by Nilofer Ahsan, Center for the Study of Social Policy
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.
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care
Best Practices:
A Report to Ready 4 K

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

Betty Emarita

Condensed Report
November 2006