Early Childhood Programs

May 4, 2018
Office of the Legislative Auditor

- Nonpartisan
- Financial Audit Division
- Program Evaluation Division
OLA in State Government

Executive Branch
- Governor
- Constitutional Officers
- State Agencies

Legislative Branch
- House of Representatives
- Senate
- OLA

Judicial Branch
- Courts
Key Findings

• Programs are complex, fragmented
• Not currently possible to determine extent of potential duplication
• Statewide data on program effectiveness are inadequate
• Legal requirements limit sharing data across programs
• Extent of early childhood screening is unknown
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs Offering Direct Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Early Childhood Family Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Early Childhood Health and Development Screening</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Family Home Visiting</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Head Start and Early Head Start</td>
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<tr>
<td>• School Readiness Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Voluntary Prekindergarten</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Programs that Provide Funding Rather than Services

- Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)
- Early Learning Scholarships
  - Pathway I, awarded to individual children
  - Pathway II, awarded to certain early learning programs or child care programs
Quality Rating System

Parent Aware Quality Rating and Improvement System

- Qualifies programs to accept scholarships and higher reimbursements for child care assistance
Complex, Fragmented Programs

• Eligibility requirements differed
  • Income is not an eligibility requirement for Early Childhood Family Education, Screening, and Voluntary Prekindergarten
  • Among other programs, income limits differ by program
Income Eligibility

2017 Income Limit for Family of Four

- Head Start: $24,600
- School Readiness*: $31,980
- Scholarships: $45,510
- Family Home Visiting: $49,200
- Child Care Assistance Program (MFIP): $64,423
Staffing Requirements Differ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Early Childhood Family Education</th>
<th>School Readiness</th>
<th>School Readiness Plus</th>
<th>Voluntary Prekindergarten</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Class Size</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff-Child Ratio</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary Requirement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Licensure</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Supervisor Licensure</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Funding and Program Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Early Childhood Family Education</th>
<th>Early Learning Scholarships-Pathway II</th>
<th>School Readiness Program</th>
<th>Voluntary Prekindergarten</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compete for Funding</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User Fees Allowed</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>In limited circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transporting Preschool Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendation

• The Legislature should consider aligning eligibility and funding requirements for certain programs
  ○ Could lead to a single application form for certain programs
  ○ Could allow providers more efficiency

• The Legislature could convene a working group as a first step
Potential Duplication

- Not possible to determine extent of potential duplication
- Agencies use different methods to identify children
Potential Duplication (cont.)

- Longitudinal data system
  - Not designed to identify potential duplication
  - Missing and incomplete data
- Department lacks participation data
- Lack of information on local program delivery
Children Using Multiple Funding Streams

15% of children who used Scholarships awarded in FY 2016 also used Child Care Assistance to pay for a program

• Does not indicate duplicative funding
Children in Multiple Programs

- Could not determine extent of potential overlap

27% of children registered in Voluntary Prekindergarten in FY 2017 were also registered in School Readiness program
Recommendation

- Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), and Department of Human Services (DHS) should jointly identify what is needed to use a universal identification number.

- MDE should consistently collect participation data.
Statewide Data on Effectiveness are Inadequate

• Statutes do not require all programs to report on their effectiveness
• Statutes place priority on school readiness
• Data do not exist to measure whether children statewide are ready for school
## Assessment Requirements Differ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Head Start and Early Head Start</th>
<th>Voluntary Prekindergarten</th>
<th>School Readiness Program</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessments Required</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must Align with Standards</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tool Must be State Approved</td>
<td></td>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Measured</td>
<td>Literacy, cognition, motor</td>
<td>Cognitive and language</td>
<td>Cognitive and language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>development, social and</td>
<td>skills</td>
<td>skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>emotional development</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Assessments at Kindergarten

• No state requirement to assess school readiness in kindergarten

81% assessed all children for school readiness

49% used assessment tools other than MDE approved
Recommendation

• Legislature should consider requiring assessments of all children’s school readiness as they complete certain early childhood programs
  o Eventually, all publicly funded, Parent Aware-rated programs
  o Use a state-approved assessment tool
  o Submit assessment results to the state

• Legislature should consider requiring assessments for children in kindergarten
Recommendation

• The Legislature should direct MDE, MDH, and DHS to plan a comprehensive approach to evaluating impacts
  • Legislature would specify general outcomes
  • Agencies would identify indicators of effectiveness
  • Legislature would decide whether to proceed
Legal Requirements Limit Data Sharing Across State Agencies

• Laws protect children’s identity
• Laws prohibit sharing data unless the subject of the data gives informed consent
• Restrictions can interfere with program operations
Recommendation

• The Legislature should consider broadening authority for MDE, MDH, and DHS to share individual-level data from early childhood programs
Early Childhood Screening

• State law requires that all children undergo health and development screening, with exception for conscientious objections

• The number of children who are not screened is unknown
Recommendation

• Minnesota Department of Education should collect data on children who are not screened
Summary

Changes are needed to address:
• Program complexity and fragmentation
• Lack of data on whether young children statewide are prepared for school
• Need to measure program impacts
• Legal restrictions on data sharing
• Unknown number of children not screened
Early Childhood Programs

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