

RESPONDING TO THE OLA REPORT ON EARLY CHILDHOOD

MCEA / MNAFEE are in agreement with many of the findings and recommendations from the Office of the Legislative Auditor's (OLA) report on Early Childhood Education. The OLA evaluated six early childhood programs, two funders of early childhood programs, and Parent Aware. They concluded that the system was fragmented because "differences in funding and program requirements have created a complex, fragmented set of early childhood programs." Because of this fragmentation, families have a more difficult time accessing programs, and staff have greater administrative difficulties in serving families.

The OLA made five recommendations for the legislature to consider. A number of these require changes at the legislative level, and others call for additional collaborative work between MDE, MDH, and DHS. For example, the OLA report recommends increased collaboration to better understand the efficacy of these programs. We know that School Readiness programs and Voluntary PreK collect outcome data on the children they serve (using one of assessment tools approved by MDE). However, the state does not collect and aggregate this data and thus, is unable to report on the effectiveness of these programs. Even without this statewide specific data, we know there is extensive research and data showing the effectiveness of high quality Minnesota early childhood programs.

MCEA and MNAFEE share the goal of creating a statewide system that better supports families and programs, and provides stakeholders with the data they need to be informed. We know that we may not always agree with every suggestion for change and will advocate for systems and policies that best support children and families.

MCEA/MNAFEE strongly urges you to watch the OLA staffs' presentation to a joint Minnesota Senate / House hearing (http://mnsenate.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=1&clip_id=2789), and read the audit's executive summary and full report: (<https://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/2018/earlychildhood.htm>)