



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MINNESOTA EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS RECOGNIZE INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING
The Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MNAFEE) presents the Innovative Programming Award to the Early ID Grant

St. Cloud, MN, April 11, 2024 – The Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MNAFEE) announces an Innovative Programming Award winner. The award is presented to acknowledge MNAFEE's appreciation of contributions to children, parents and families and/or the publicly funded programs that serve them.

The Early ID Grant was chosen as a winner of the MNAFEE Innovative Programming Award for 2024. Centennial, Spring Lake Park and Saint Francis Area School districts, with funding provided by the Anoka County Children and Family Council, collaborate to provide new and innovative ways to reach screening age eligible children. The primary goal of this collaboration is to increase the number of three year olds screened while decreasing the number of children entering kindergarten unscreened and possibly unidentified as needing additional services.

The effort began in 2011, with Centennial joining in 2017. The districts' focus is on screening children early, meaning before age four, outreach to the communities, and educating families about early childhood screening. The three districts attend local events to find children of screening age, contact families who did not show up to a scheduled screening appointment two or more times, and follow up with families if a referral is made to ensure they see the referral through to its completed status. Since the districts all have 0-4 census under 1800 children, by working together they are using resources efficiently by pooling efforts when possible yet maintaining the unique efforts within their own district as appropriate.

Over the years additional needs came to the forefront. Barriers sometimes prevent families from completing early childhood screening. These include: lack of transportation, lack of or limited paid time off, language barriers, a high level of mobility, or homelessness. Analyzing the barriers and developing solutions initiated the focus of off site screenings. Screenings "on the go" take place in homes, at childcare homes and centers, at private preschools, and at housing complexes. Evidence of the impact of this collaboration is that in 2022-2023, the three districts saw an increase of 3.41% of three year olds screened from the previous year, 2021-2022. On average the state sees a 1% annual increase in three year olds screened.

Parents have been grateful for the Early ID staff working with them to find ways for their child to complete screening by addressing transportation barriers or providing screening during their child's time at child care or preschool. In addition, parents have benefited from the resources a screener may be able to provide to them such as information and sometimes access to local food shelves, housing assistance, local libraries, Early Childhood Family Education, preschool programs, or child care, home visiting programs, public health etc.

The collaborative efforts of Centennial, Spring Lake Park and Saint Francis School districts would not be possible without the financial support from the Anoka County Child and Family Council. This innovative program meets a goal of providing optimal services to families within Anoka County through collaboration and creativity.

The Early ID Grant was recognized at the MNAFEE Annual Conference in St. Cloud on April 11, 2024.

About MNAFEE: The Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MNAFEE) is a non-profit association promoting parent education, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), and early childhood programming in public schools.

About the Innovative Programming Award: The Innovative Programming Award is presented to outstanding projects that exemplify the vision/mission of MNAFEE and are innovative approaches to addressing a community need through cooperation and teamwork amongst individuals and/or organizations, and use of resources. The project could be a one-time event or an ongoing activity that is associated with a parent education, Early Childhood Family Education and/or public school preschool in Minnesota. Its focus could be on children, parents, families or professionals.

Nominees for the MNAFEE Friend of the Year Award must:

- Include at least one member of MNAFEE
- Exemplify the vision/mission of MNAFEE:

Vision: All families have access to comprehensive, high quality parent education and early childhood programming in public schools.

Mission: The mission of Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MNAFEE) is to promote, advocate for, and strengthen parent education, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), and early childhood programming in public schools.

- Address a community need
- Demonstrate cooperation between individuals and/or organizations
- Enhance the lives of young children, parents, families or professionals