





Early Learning Scholarship Cost Estimate

- Number of children below 185% of poverty
 - Age 0-2: 69,000
 - Age 3-4: 46,000
- Average annual cost per child that reflects participation across a mix of program types
 - Age 0-2: \$12,088
 - Age 3-4: \$9,704
- Expected participation rate
 - Age 0-2: 60%
 - Age 3-4: 80%
- Total cost less current investment
 - Age 0-2: \$368 million
 - Age 3-4: \$47 million
 - Total: \$415 million



EARLY LEARNING SCHOLARSHIPS

			
WHO is getting them?*	WHERE are they going?	WHEN are they used?	HOW are they structured?
<p>60% children of color</p> <p>55% priority children**</p>	<p>56% metro area</p> <p>44% greater Minnesota</p>	<p>40% ages 0-2</p> <p>60% ages 3-4</p>	<p>100% require best practice use</p> <p>100% offer choices</p>

CHALLENGE: 35,000 low-income MN children can't access quality early learning programs, or Scholarships.

*All numbers for Pathway I Early Learning Scholarships **Experiencing homelessness, in foster care, involved with the child protection system, or have a teen parent.



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"My son was a little over 3 when he started attending preschool and didn't know how to write and recognize much of anything as far as letters, shapes, numbers, etc. He is 4 months shy of his 5th birthday and can write and spell out his first and last name, write every letter and number up to 20, can count to 100, can draw and recognize shapes and count to 20 in Spanish!"

K. Halvorson
Ham Lake, MN



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"I felt pure excitement and relief [when the family learned they received an Early Learning Scholarship]. I have always agreed with starting children's education young. Watching the growth and development of our daughter makes us confident she will be more than ready for kindergarten. What a life saver."

C. Sanders
Brooklyn Park, MN



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"We feel extremely grateful and honored to be awarded with the [Early Learning] Scholarship. The children spend 8+ hours a day at this center, and they love it. We feel our children are in great hands, and we are getting a great preschool education and great social skills as well."

D. Stafki and A. Erickson
St. Cloud, MN



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"Without the assistance of...the [Early Learning] Scholarships...we would not be giving to the community like we are now. And beyond that, our children are amazing smart and talented individuals..."

N. Smith
Plymouth, MN



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"It changed our lives not having to worry about whether or not affording daycare is an option. My daycare provider is awesome with my kids and is very educational and fun at the same time."

A. Stevens
Ogema, MN

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"When you have two parents who work full-time it's hard to get in all the things kids need to know before kindergarten. Having the daycare be part of the Parent Aware program, she is always taking classes or getting new ideas about the ways kids learn and play. The Scholarship has been a blessing for our family..."

K. Mindt
Ogema, MN

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"As a foster parent and pre-adoptive home, it would have made it more financially challenging for us. There are so many children that need loving homes and many that cannot financially be a permanent placement. This Scholarship can support families and children in providing a well rounded environment."

B. Spaeth
Ogema, MN

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"I was able to secure a full-time job with great benefits for me and my son. He recognizes all the letters...and also the numbers. He can write his name and also read at the age of 3. I would like to thank the Parent Aware Scholarship program for ... getting my son ready for kindergarten."

C. Gunderson
Ogema, MN

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"Having this Scholarship has helped my daughter grow mentally, emotionally, and physically. She has positive role models here and they help with becoming educated in the areas I have a hard time with. I feel confident that my child will be prepared for kindergarten because of the Scholarship..."

J. Sampe
Ramsey, MN



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"This [Early Learning] Scholarship was truly a blessing. This was the only way I could keep her in daycare so I could work full time. It literally felt like a weight lifted off my shoulders. With this Scholarship, she can go 5 days a week and get the education she needs to be ready for kindergarten."

S. Lindgren
Brooklyn Park, MN



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"...when we got approved [for the Early Learning Scholarship] it was the first blessed sign that our child would still receive an education and help our pocketbook to not have to sacrifice his education to put food on the table and a roof over our beds until we found new employment. Our family places education as a driving force for future success."

S. and S. Nemer
St. Paul, MN



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"My husband and I are disabled veterans, so employment options and salaries are limited. Therefore, the Early Learning Scholarship provides an amazing opportunity for our children to attend a school with exceptional care. The writing, social, and motor skills instructed are excellent, and I know they will benefit tremendously when they attend elementary school."

B. Roberts
Lakeville, MN

Minnesota Reformer

A grandparent-as-parent speaks: We need more money for early childhood | Opinion

By **Jacqueline Scott-Hopkins**

February 25, 2021



Getty Images.

I know the Legislature hears from lots of people in need. I'm sure that must make it challenging to prioritize state funding. But I'd like to make a plea for helping Minnesota's youngest first, because they are the most vulnerable among us and have the most to gain and lose.

To help you understand my thinking, I want to share my own story. I am a licensed social worker. In the past, I have served as the director of the Salvation Army Harbor Light Center and as program manager of the Families Moving Forward Family Shelter.

In those roles, I have continually seen the desperate need to help low-income families access high-quality child care and early learning programs for their children.

Early care and education are absolutely life-changing for families in need. First, parents need quality early learning programs to free them to do the things they need to do to support their children, such as work outside the home and/or get education and job training. This allows families to become self-sustaining over the long run.

Second, the children themselves need to have their fast-developing brains stimulated in quality early learning programs. School is essential at any age, but it is scientifically proven that the impact of education in the first five years of life can be huge and life changing. Our youngest children need to develop key foundational skills, so they can build on them to succeed later in school and life.

When families can't afford high-quality early learning programs, children all too often fall behind in their development and learning. That causes them to struggle to catch up with children from families who take such programs for granted. If you want to know how we can become a more equitable society, it all starts with closing these opportunity gaps in the earliest years.

In addition to my professional life, I've also seen the need for quality early care and education in my personal life. Like so many others, I am a grandparent serving as a parent to two beautiful young children, Zander and Milan. Two members of my family were unable to care for their children, so my retired husband and I stepped forward and adopted them. As a social worker, I observed that this "grandparent as parent" situation is increasingly common, something state leaders should keep in mind as they make policy.



The author with her husband and two grandchildren they are raising as primary caregivers. Courtesy photo.

While my husband and I take great pride and joy in helping these wonderful young children, playing that grandparent as parent role at our stage of life is challenging. My husband is retired and on a fixed income; I worked full-time to make ends meet. We've already raised five children of our own. So our resources are limited. This winter, a serious bout with COVID-19 also complicated things, because it made it impossible for me to work for a while.

In addition to financial struggles, these children need specialized help that we simply aren't equipped to provide. Both have special needs; one of the children is hearing impaired, which has delayed his speech development.

Thanks to state-funded Early Learning Scholarships, both Milan and Zander have been able to attend New Horizon Academy in Coon Rapids, a high-quality early learning program. Because of that early learning lifeline, they are getting the special help they need.

We are so grateful that they are benefitting in so many ways from that excellent early learning opportunity. Every day, we see that they are learning amazing new things. Legislators and Gov. Tim Walz: You should be proud of what you are doing by supporting those programs.

At the same time, the programs could do better by these children. By far the biggest problem is that there simply isn't enough help available. There are 35,000 low-income Minnesota children who can't access quality early learning programs because of the lack of state funding.

That's a tragedy. In every corner of Minnesota, young children deserve the same life-saving help that is changing my adopted children's lives.

In addition to insufficient funding, scholarships have a per child cap that is way too low to cover the cost of full-time care, which often causes children to get cut off from their care and learning and puts families in crisis. Fortunately, a small adjustment was made last year, but more improvement is needed.

Again, I really do understand that the Legislature and governor have a lot of pressing needs to consider. As a social worker, I see those needs up close and personal every day. Still, it's difficult for me to imagine any cause more important than helping Minnesota's most vulnerable children at a tender stage of life when they must be developing the education foundation needed over their entire lives. We should put these disadvantaged children at the very top of the state government funding priority list.

Jacqueline Scott-Hopkins

Jacqueline Scott-Hopkins is a certified social worker, mom and grandparent as parent from Coon Rapids.