

# NAZ Internal Evaluation Report: Early Childhood

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## Executive Summary

### Background and Purpose

- The Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) has launched a results-based accountability initiative called *Results NAZ* to examine processes and outcomes in each of its action areas. This report provides information to be used as part of the Results NAZ discussion of Early Childhood services, to be completed in January 2015.
- The Early Childhood Solution Plan (see Appendix A) provides guidance on how NAZ and its Partners work toward two key results:
  - **Result 1:** Prenatally through age three, children's age-appropriate development\* toward kindergarten readiness will be monitored and services and supports will be provided as needed.
  - **Result 2:** NAZ-enrolled children ages three through five will make adequate progress toward developing literacy, numeracy, social-emotional and other skills that contribute to kindergarten readiness.
- This report was developed by the NAZ Internal Evaluation Team to document and evaluate the implementation and short-term effects of the Early Childhood Solution Plan, with the goal of using these data to both support the *Results NAZ* process and to provide a structured process for the review and potential revision of the solution plan.
- The information in this report addresses three results-based accountability questions:
  - How much of the intended intervention was provided?
  - How well was this intervention implemented?
  - Was anyone better off, or what were the short-term effects of this intervention?
- Evaluation questions were drawn from the Early Childhood Solution Plan and questions identified by action team leads.
- Data were gathered from a variety of sources, but were largely drawn from NAZ Connect, NAZ's internal case management and tracking tool.

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\*Developmental domains include cognition/language, social-emotional, gross and fine motor, and health

## Key Findings

The body of this report focuses on a priority set of the Early Childhood Solution Plan. Additional information on evaluation methods and other results are presented in appendices to this report.

### Short-Term Effects

#### ■ Progress Monitoring Measures

- In general, NAZ Scholars were less likely to be judged “on track” in most developmental, early literacy and early numeracy domains when compared to national norms and research samples, with the largest discrepancy occurring in early literacy domains.

#### ■ Beginning of Kindergarten Assessment

- As measured by the BKA in 2013, NAZ Kindergartners demonstrated a higher level of kindergarten readiness than other kindergartners in the Zone.

### Process Results

#### ■ Overall Implementation of the Solution Plan

- Since October 2013, the Early Childhood Solution Plan shifted from having the largest portion of its elements in the design stage of implementation to the largest portion being fully implemented by NAZ and its Partners.

#### ■ Progress Monitoring, Screening, Observation and Referral

- NAZ exceeded its target of 70 percent of Partner-enrolled scholars assessed with all measures relevant for their age, but did not meet its target of assessing 35 percent of scholars not in Partner programs with all relevant measures.

#### ■ Prenatal Services

- Of the 34 women who reported that they were pregnant during the past year, available data indicated that 91 percent visited a health professional regularly and 21 percent were screened for depression.

#### ■ High-Quality Care and Education

- 52 percent of all NAZ preschoolers are currently enrolled in high-quality programs.
- NAZ families with birth to five-year-olds have received a total of 179 scholarships or other subsidies for enrolling scholars in early learning programming; 123 of those scholarships or subsidies are currently being used.

#### ■ Expanding Opportunities and Resources

- In the past six months, the number of high-quality programs in/near the Zone has increased by three programs and the number involved in MN’s quality rating system process increased from 24 to 40.
- In 2013, estimates showed that there were slots in high-quality early care and education programming for only 47 percent of children living in/near the zone.

#### ■ Parent and Child Preparation for the Transition to Kindergarten

- NAZ Connect data revealed that 22 percent of scholars entering kindergarten in fall 2014 received support from NAZ staff related to the coming transition, and 18 percent attended a Transition to Kindergarten event held by NAZ and MPS.

## Authors' Note

This report was produced by the NAZ Internal Evaluation Team at the University of Minnesota; this team is directed by Scott McConnell, Ph.D., and includes Laura Potter, Joseph Demers, Lynn Edwards, and Kevin Overson. Kara Rose provided editorial assistance. This work is supported by a contract with the Northside Achievement Zone, however all work is conducted independently and no official endorsement by the funder should be inferred.

The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of NAZ program leaders and staff, Action Team leads, NAZ Program Partners, and the parents and scholars who contributed time, effort, and information that helped produce this report.

Scott McConnell and colleagues developed assessment tools and related resources known as *Individual Growth & Development Indicators* and *Get it, Got it, Go!* This intellectual property is subject of technology commercialization by the University of Minnesota, and portions have been licensed to Early Learning Labs, Inc. Scott McConnell has equity interest in Early Learning Labs, Inc., a company which may commercially benefit from the results of this research. The University of Minnesota also has equity and royalty interests in ELL which, in turn, may benefit McConnell and colleagues. These relationships have been reviewed and are being managed by the University of Minnesota in accordance with its conflict of interest policies.

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This report is available on the CEED@UROC NAZ Internal Evaluation [website](#), and is available in alternate formats on request. For more information, please contact the authors at [ceeduroc@umn.edu](mailto:ceeduroc@umn.edu) or 612-624-9381.

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## Introduction and Methods

### Purpose

This report is a product of the NAZ Internal Evaluation team at the University of Minnesota. The team works collaboratively with NAZ and its Partners to (1) gather information about the level and fidelity of implementation of NAZ Solution Plans, and (2) report the short-term effects of NAZ's interventions to support its key outcomes or checkpoints. As part of this internal evaluation work, the IE team gathers focused information for each solution plan at several points each year. This information (along with additional data) is included in this evaluation report that in turn contributes to NAZ's results-based accountability initiative, *Results NAZ*. The purpose of this report is to evaluate and document implementation and short-term effects of the NAZ Early Childhood Solution Plan as NAZ and its Partners work toward two NAZ Early Childhood Results:

- **Result 1:** Prenatally through age three, children's age-appropriate development\* toward kindergarten readiness will be monitored, and services and supports will be provided as needed. *\*Developmental domains include cognition/language, social-emotional, gross and fine motor, and health.*
- **Result 2:** NAZ-enrolled children ages three through five will make adequate progress toward developing literacy, numeracy, social-emotional and other skills that contribute to kindergarten readiness.

Results of the evaluation will be incorporated into the *Results NAZ* process. Consistent with the overall design of *Results NAZ*, information presented here addresses three key questions: *How much* of the intended intervention was provided, *how well* was this intervention implemented, and *was anyone better off, or what were the short-term effects, of this intervention effort?*

### Organization of the Report

This report includes three main sections:

- Short-Term Effects ("Is anyone better off?")
  - This section summarizes the data about how NAZ early childhood scholars, or NAZ-enrolled children ages birth to five, are performing in pre-academic and other developmental domains.
- Process Results ("How much did we do?" and "How well did we do it?")
  - This section presents information on the extent of implementation, and fidelity of that implementation, for Essential Active Ingredients (EAI) of the Solution Plan. For presentation purposes, EIAs are grouped into several programmatic units.
- Evaluator Impressions and Recommendations for Future Internal Evaluations
  - This brief section provides commentary from the IE team about the internal evaluation process and ongoing maturation of NAZ intervention, data collection, and continuous improvement.

## Process

The evaluation involved the following process in September - November of 2014:

- *Results NAZ* Planning meeting
  - Evaluation questions were developed based on the Early Childhood Solution Plan as well as key questions identified by Early Childhood Action Team leads Maureen Seiwert (Executive Director of Early Childhood Education for Minneapolis Public Schools), Dianne Haulcy (Senior Policy Aide to the Mayor of Minneapolis) and Michelle Palo (NAZ Project Services Director).
  - The internal evaluation team met with the Michelle Palo (NAZ Project Services Director), Jillian Kahn (NAZ Project Services Coordinator) and Dr. Tracy Roloff (NAZ Results Systems Strategist) to determine which questions to evaluate for 2014.
  - Some of the questions developed by team could not be evaluated at this time. This was typically because of a lack of robust data coming from NAZ Connect or a need to do more complex or time-consuming data collection (e.g. focus groups with families). See Appendix B for details about these questions and the primary barriers to data collection.
- Data were identified and gathered from:
  - NAZ Connect, NAZ's internal case management and tracking tool
  - Attendance data from Twin Cities Healthy Start at The Family Partnership
  - Information from Parent Aware about high-quality early learning programs in and around the Zone
  - Ratings of the state of implementation of the solution plan by Early Childhood Action Team leads and NAZ staff
  - Analyses of scholar performance on the Beginning of Kindergarten Assessment conducted by Wilder Research
  - Analyses related to supply and demand of early care and education services in North Minneapolis conducted by members of the University of Minnesota Internal Evaluation team
  - Information about the waiting list for access to Child Care Assistance Program funding from Carol Miller, Senior Human Services manager at Hennepin County
- The NAZ Internal Evaluation team analyzed these data and compiled the results into sections consistent with the overall design of *Results NAZ* to address the three key questions described above.

## Short-Term Effects: Is anyone better off?

The following section includes information about the effects NAZ and its Partners' interventions are having on key outcomes related to scholars being ready for kindergarten.

### Progress Monitoring Measures

#### How did birth to five-year-old scholars perform on the ASQ, ASQ-SE, and myIGDIs Early Literacy and Numeracy progress monitoring measures?

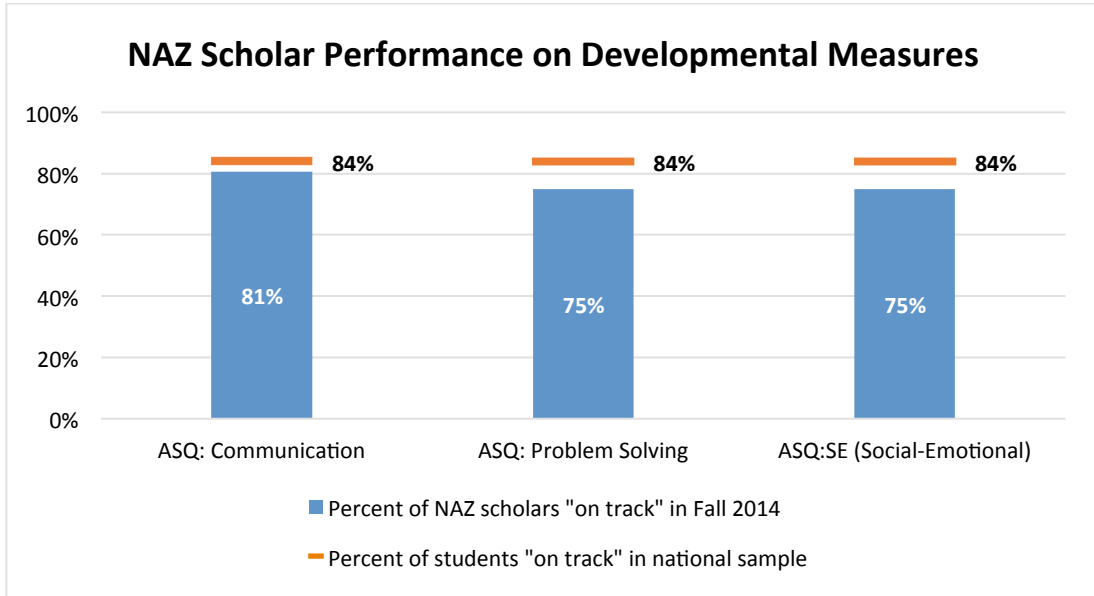
As specified in EAI 2.1.3, scholars and their families participate in progress monitoring data collection twice per year with the goal of determining if they are on track to reach developmental and early learning milestones. Early Childhood progress monitoring measures include:

- **Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ):** A developmental screening tool administered for NAZ scholars age birth to five.
- **Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional (ASQ:SE):** A social-emotional screening tool administered for NAZ scholars age birth to five.
- **Individual Growth and Development Indicators: Early Literacy+ (myIGDIs-EL):** A set of assessments for monitoring the growth and development of young children's early literacy skills. Three of these measures (Picture Naming, Sound Identification, and Rhyming) were administered to 4-5 year old NAZ Scholars.
- **Individual Growth and Development Indicators: Early Numeracy (myIGDIs-EN):** A set of assessments for monitoring the growth and development of young children's early numeracy skills. Three of these measures (Oral Counting, Quantity Comparison, and 1-to-1 Correspondence Counting) were administered to 4-5 year old NAZ Scholars.

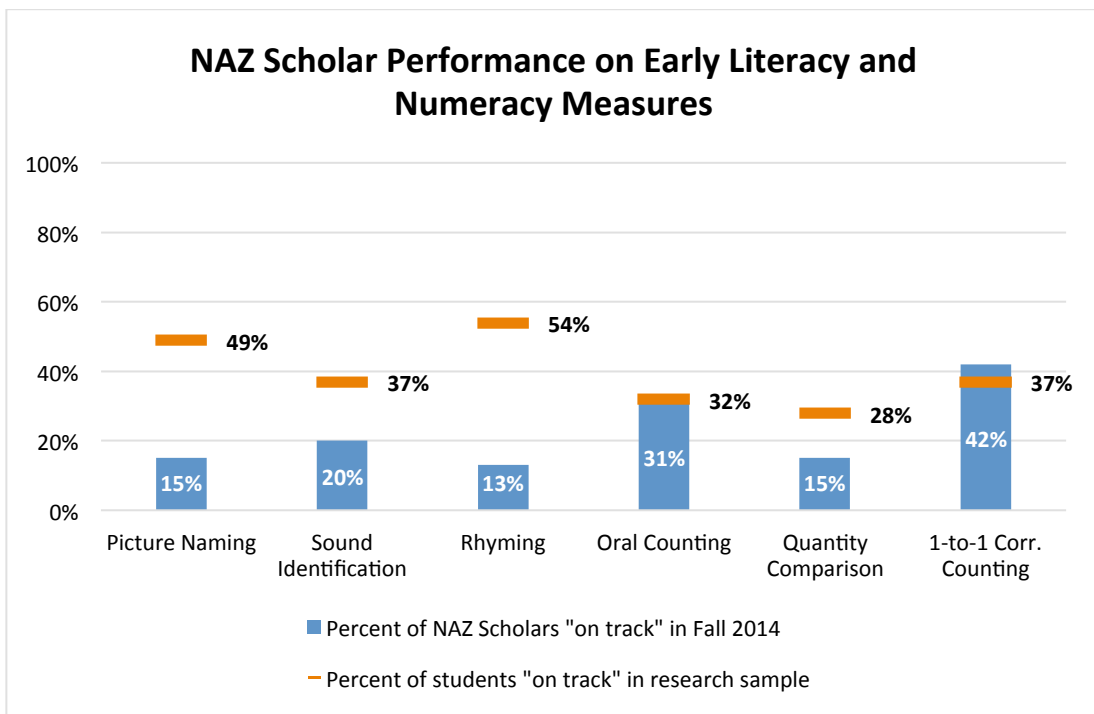
For each measure, scholars' scores are summarized, using national norms or research samples,<sup>2</sup> to describe current proficiency or risk status. Using preexisting criteria, individual scores are evaluated as "on track developmentally" (Green), "at some risk for developmental delay" (Yellow), or "at risk for developmental delay" (Red). For more detailed information about these measures and outcome data for spring and fall of 2014, see Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup> To provide some comparison for estimating the proportion of scholars expected to score at each level of proficiency, we included information from the following sources:

- ASQ and ASQ:SE: Estimates of expected proportions of children "on track" came from data presented by the assessment developers.
- MyIGDIs Early Literacy: We examined rates of observed performance for a large number of children, many at risk-preschoolers, in a statewide assessment program in Iowa.
- MyIGDIs Early Numeracy: We examined rates of observed performance for approximately 400 ethnically and socioeconomically diverse preschool students in a small urban area in Pennsylvania.



As a group, NAZ Scholars are slightly less likely to be judged “on track” on the Age and Stages Questionnaire and Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Social-Emotional. Proportions of scholars on-track are relatively similar across all three domains assessed by these measures.



As a group, NAZ Scholars are less likely to be judged “on track” on each of the *myIGDI*s early literacy and early numeracy domains, with the exception of 1-to-1 Correspondence Counting. Proportions of scholars on-track varied across each domain, with the Oral Counting and 1-to-1 Correspondence Counting having the highest percentages of NAZ scholars who were on track.



## Beginning of Kindergarten Assessment

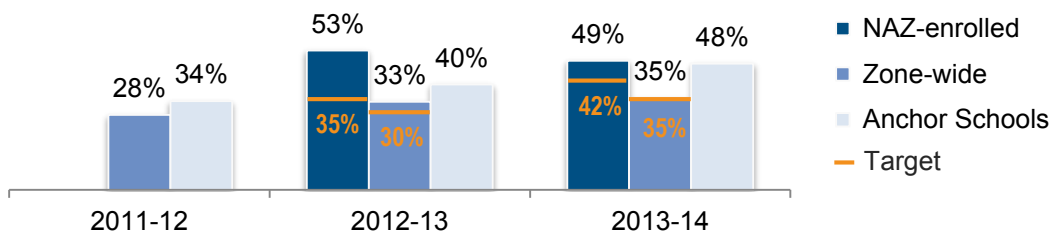
### How did kindergarteners perform on the Beginning of Kindergarten Assessment (BKA)?

Kindergarten readiness is not only the ultimate goal of the Early Childhood Solution Plan, it is also included as one of the four major “checkpoints” or long-term goals of NAZ. In Minneapolis Public Schools 2010 test of kindergarten readiness using the Beginning Kindergarten Assessment, only 29 percent of entering kindergartners living in and near the Zone met literacy benchmarks compared to 71 percent of children in the Minneapolis Public School District as a whole. NAZ has set a long-term goal of increasing kindergarten readiness from 29 percent to 80 percent.

To determine scholars’ kindergarten readiness, NAZ also uses the Beginning of Kindergarten Assessment (BKA), a tool developed by Minneapolis Public Schools that assesses scholars’ early literacy and numeracy skills when they enter kindergarten. Wilder Research, NAZ’s external evaluation contractor, conducted the following analyses. This content was excerpted from the *Northside Achievement Zone 2014 Year-End Report*.

**NAZ-enrolled kindergartners arrive in kindergarten more ready to learn than non-enrolled students. NAZ scholars met or exceeded early childhood targets two years in a row (2012-13 and 2013-14).**

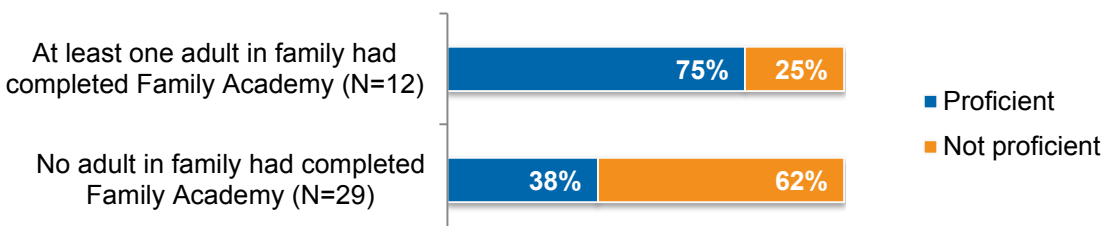
#### 1. Kindergarten readiness, proficient in both literacy and numeracy



**Note:** Where applicable, targets are shown in orange. Targets were not set for all years. 2014 is the first year all schools used the BKA. Prior to 2014, figures reflect only Nellie Stone Johnson and Hall. In addition, note that, due to the addition of newly available data for some NAZ scholars, the proficiency rate for 2013-14 is lower than initially reported (though still well above the target). Retroactive adjustments like this may occur as data completeness improves, though most adjustments will be smaller and their incidence will be much less common in the future, as the completeness of our data system has improved significantly this year.

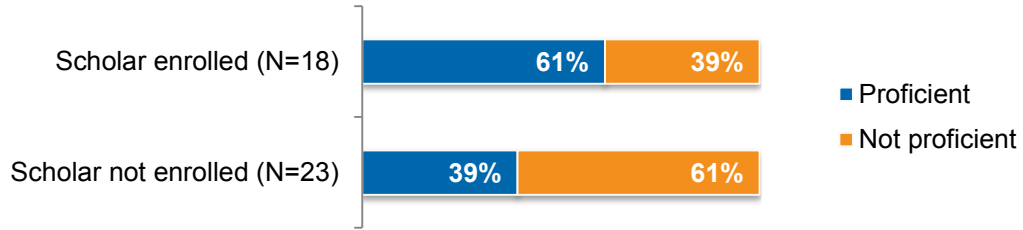
**NAZ scholars whose parents graduated from a Family Academy program, one of NAZ’s parent education and empowerment offerings, were generally more likely to be ready for kindergarten than scholars whose parents did not participate in Family Academy.**

#### 2. Fall 2013 kindergarten readiness overall: Family Academy completion



**NAZ scholars who enrolled in early learning centers as preschoolers were more likely to enter kindergarten ready than scholars who had not had a formal early childhood educational experience.**

*3. Fall 2013 kindergarten readiness overall: High-quality early learning center enrollment*



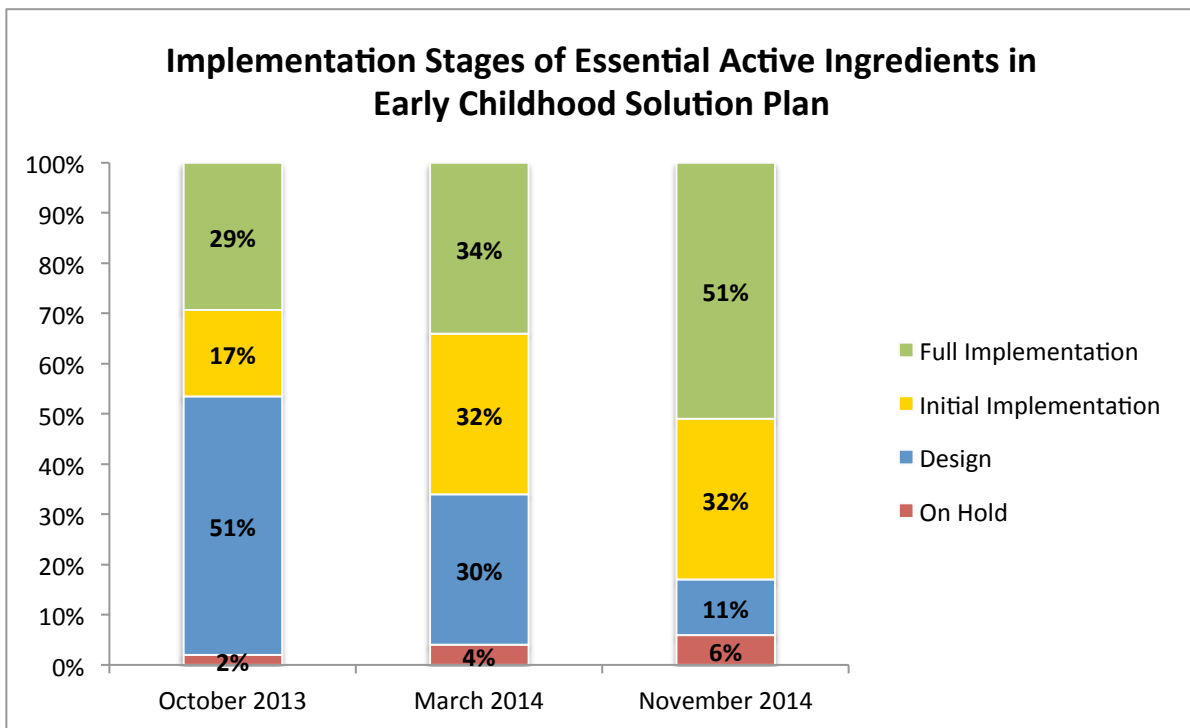
Taken together, these results suggest that aspects of the NAZ Early Childhood Solution – most notably, Family Academy parent education and enrollment in high-quality early childhood programs – are associated with improving results – a trend consistent with kindergarten readiness for NAZ scholars compared to other children in the Zone.

## Process Results: How much did we do and how well did we do it?

### Overall Implementation of the Solution Plan

In April 2013, NAZ adopted the Early Childhood Solution Plan, developed by the Early Childhood Action Team. Approximately every six months since adoption, the NAZ early childhood program director, Action Team leads, and other support staff rated each Essential Active Ingredient (EAI) in the solution plan on the extent to which NAZ and its Partners were implementing the defined activities. They rated each EAI as one of the following:

- **On Hold:** These activities are not actively being worked on.
- **Design Stage:** NAZ and its Partners are in the process of designing and planning for implementation.
- **Initial Implementation:** NAZ and its Partners are beginning to implement the EAI, but are not yet expecting to see significant outcomes.
- **Full Implementation:** NAZ and its Partners are fully implementing all elements of the EAI with the expectation that outcomes are a reflection of how well scholars and families are responding to the intervention.



Over the past year, the Early Childhood solution plan has shifted from the largest portion of the EAIs being in the design stage to the largest portion being fully implemented by NAZ and its Partners.

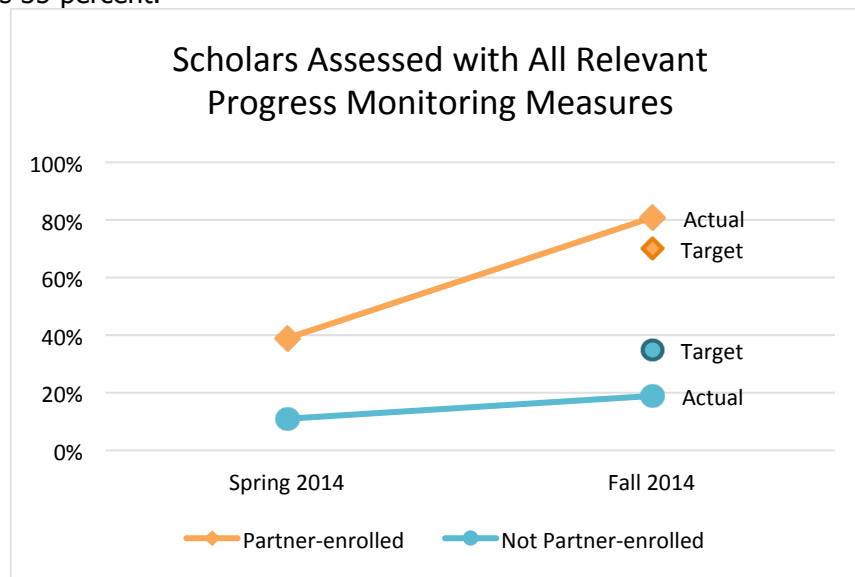
## Progress Monitoring, Screening, Observation and Referral

This section addresses how NAZ and its partners are noticing and acting on developmental and early learning concerns through formal and/or informal assessment.

### How many/what percent of birth to five-year-olds had their progress monitored in the past year?

According to EAI 2.1.3, *all* scholars birth to age 5 should have their progress monitored using the ASQ, ASQ-SE, Early Literacy *my*IGDIs and Early Numeracy *my*IGDIs every six months to determine if they are on track to reach developmental and early learning milestones (see Appendix C for more details about measures).

In summer 2014, NAZ and its Early Childhood Partners set performance targets for the proportion of scholars who would be assessed with all relevant measure for their age. For scholars enrolled in Partner programs the target was 70 percent, and for scholars not enrolled in Partner programs the target was 35 percent.



As demonstrated above, 81 percent of scholars enrolled in Partner programs had all relevant measures collected, exceeding the target of 70 percent. However, 19 percent of scholars not in Partner programs had all relevant measures collected, which did not meet the target of 35 percent.

### How many/what percent of scholars birth to age 5 were referred for services as a result of informal observation or progress monitoring?

EAI 2.1.4 states that when concerns are identified through informal observation or progress monitoring, NAZ or Partner staff are to follow the NAZ *Developmental Concern Protocol*. This protocol (see Appendix D) was developed in 2014 and articulates required next steps when a concern about a scholar's development – typically, a score indicating high developmental risk – is noticed. In particular, NAZ Early Childhood Navigators are to identify instances where progress monitoring scores indicate significant risk, and contact a scholar's family. Based on this contact, Early Childhood Navigators either determine that the scholar has already been referred for additional assessment and service, or set a goal in NAZ Connect of "utilize opportunity to support

this child's development towards kindergarten-readiness or address concerns revealed in an assessment.”

- In spring 2014, 70 scholars were indicated as “At risk” on at least one of the early childhood progress monitoring assessments. As of October 29, 2014, 31 of these scholars (or 44 percent) had a goal set to support development towards kindergarten readiness.
- In fall 2014, 95 scholars were indicated as “At risk” on at least one of the assessments (42 of these scholars had already received a red score on the spring assessments, while 53 of these scholars received a red score for the first time). Of these 95 scholars, 45 (47 percent) had a goal set to support development towards kindergarten readiness.

We note that this protocol of follow-up for scores indicating significant developmental risk was only recently developed, and is still in the process of being communicated to and used by NAZ Partners. Additionally, we note that available data do not indicate scholars with documented risk status on one or more progress monitoring measures who were already referred for additional evaluation and/or service.

## Prenatal Services for NAZ Mothers

### How many/what percent of known-to-be pregnant mothers reported attending regular prenatal visits?

EAI 3.2 articulated that pregnant women should have “early and continuous medical care.” We examined data from the health and enrollment tabs in NAZ Connect that asked about pregnancy status, prenatal assessment completion and regular visits to a health professional in order to report on this question.

- **34 NAZ-enrolled women** had NAZ Connect data showing a status of pregnant within the last year or a due date that would have meant they were pregnant during the last year (out of a total of 776 females ages 12 - 55). Of those women:
  - **31 (91 percent)** indicated that they “visit a health professional regularly.”
  - **24 (71 percent)** indicated that “a prenatal assessment has been completed.”
  - **23 (68 percent)** indicated that they had both completed a prenatal assessment and regularly visit a health professional.

As these data indicate, most pregnant women reported regular health care visits and a smaller number reported completing a prenatal assessment.

### How many/what percent of NAZ-enrolled women who have been pregnant in the past year have been screened for depression and referred to services as needed?

EAI 3.3 specified that prenatal and perinatal women were to be screened for depression and referred to services as needed. We reviewed the number of women who had been pregnant in the past year according to NAZ Connect and cross referenced this list with those that participated in [Twin Cities Healthy Start](#), a program aimed at “assisting pregnant and parenting families to have healthy pregnancies, safe births, and healthy babies who grow and thrive in their first year.” One element of Healthy Start services is the provision of depression screening and referral. Healthy Start is provided through The Family Partnership and is the primary Partner that NAZ staff are expected to refer to when a NAZ-enrolled woman is pregnant.

- There were **34 women** who had NAZ Connect data showing a status of pregnant within the last year or a due date that would have meant they were pregnant during the last year. Of this list of known mothers, **six (18 percent) were screened for depression** through Healthy Start at The Family Partnership in the past year.
- Other pregnant and antenatal women may have been screened through other means; no data are available to estimate the rate of screening for this group.

This limited data demonstrates what we definitively know about NAZ-enrolled women who indicated pregnancy and attended one program that provides depression screening. To facilitate future evaluation it will be important to ensure that pregnancy data are robust and that all programs providing depression screening are accounted for in the data set.

## High-Quality Care and Education for Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers

The following two questions address how often NAZ Scholars were enrolled in high-quality programming, with “high-quality” defined as receiving a rating of three or four stars according to [Minnesota’s Parent Aware Quality Rating System](#). To investigate this question, we examined NAZ Connect data about early childhood programming placement and compared this to a current list of 3- and 4-star rated programs. We conducted these analyses in April 2014 (data pulled on 4/22/2014) and October 2014 (data pulled on 10/29/2014).

### Of infants and toddlers attending care and education programs, how many/what percent are enrolled at 3- or 4-star rated programs?

EAI 5.1.2 specified that not all infants and toddlers were to be enrolled in programming, but that when enrolled, they should attend 3- or 4-star rated programs.

*Table 1. Of birth to two-year-olds enrolled in a program, how many/what percent were enrolled in a 3- or 4-star rated program?*

Age	Number in NAZ		Number in any program		Number in 3-4 star programs (% of those in any program)	
	April 2014	Oct 2014	April 2014	Oct 2014	April 2014	Oct 2014
<b>0</b>	53	20	3	1	2 (67%)	1 (100%)
<b>1</b>	80	78	21	9	19 (91%)	6 (67%)
<b>2</b>	71	83	26	33	20 (77%)	28 (85%)
<b>Total</b>	204	181	50	43	41 (82%)	35 (81%)

As these data indicate, the number of birth to two-year-old scholars enrolled in NAZ declined from April to October of 2014, as did the number enrolled in programming. Despite this decrease in number, the percentage of scholars attending high quality programming has not changed for the group as a whole.

## How many/what percent of preschoolers are enrolled at 3- or 4-star rated care and education programs?

In contrast to the goal for infants and toddlers, NAZ intends for *all* preschoolers to enroll in high-quality early childhood services; EAI 5.2.1 specified that “All NAZ-enrolled preschool children attend a 3- or 4-star rated program.”

*Table 2. Of all three to five-year-old NAZ scholars, how many/what percent are enrolled in a 3- or 4-star rated program?*

Age	Number in NAZ		Number in any program		Number in 3- and 4-star programs (% of all NAZ scholars)	
	April 2014	Oct 2014	April 2014	Oct 2014	April 2014	Oct 2014
<b>3</b>	85	83	35	36	31 (37%)	31 (37%)
<b>4</b>	88	101	52	68	47 (60%)	62 (61%)
<b>5</b>	68	14	52	10	46 (77%)	10 (71%)
<b>Total</b>	241	198	139	114	124 (52%)	103 (52%)

Similar to birth to two-year-olds, these data indicate that the number of three to five-year-old scholars enrolled in NAZ declined from April to October of 2014, as did the number enrolled in any programming. Despite this decrease in number, the percentage of scholars attending high-quality programming has not changed, remaining at just over half of preschool scholars and significantly below the goal of 100% enrollment for this age group.

## How many/what percent of NAZ scholars birth to age 5 are receiving financial supports for early childhood programming?

As articulated in EAI 5.2.4 and 5.3.2, NAZ staff support families in accessing funding resources that will allow their scholar to attend high-quality early childhood programming. To examine this question, we examined data from NAZ Connect about the number of early childhood scholarships awarded and the number of families accessing financial assistance from Hennepin County’s Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). The types of funding reported here include the following (for more information, see Appendix E):

- [State Early Learning Scholarships](#)
  - Data for Pathway I scholarships were included here. Unfortunately, due to limited data sharing abilities at this time, data on Pathway II scholarships were not included in this year’s analyses.
- [Race to the Top Scholarships](#)
- [Child Care Assistance Program](#)
- Other Scholarships (e.g. Buuck Morgan Scholarships)

The data below reflect both the current use of these financial supports by families with birth to five-year-olds (data pulled from NAZ Connect on 10/31/2014), as well as an overall total of how many scholarships have been awarded to NAZ families.

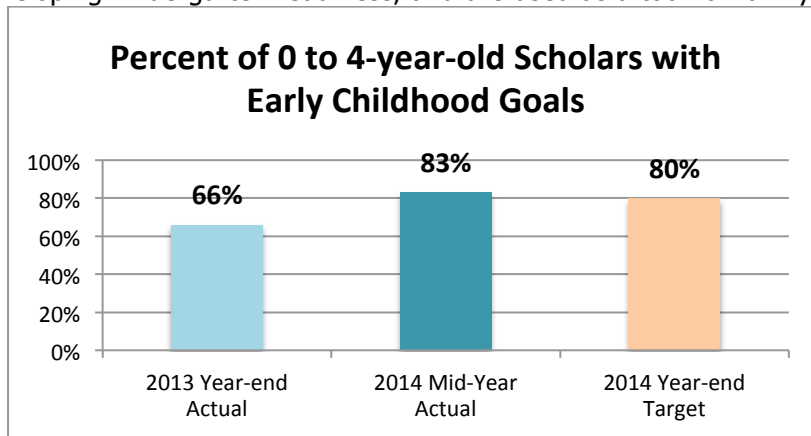
Table 3. Families with birth to five-year-olds' use of financial resources that support early learning

Financial Resource	Scholars with application in process	Scholars on waiting list	Scholars currently using resource	Total ever used this resource
<b>State Early Learning Scholarships – Pathway I</b>	2	25	20	34
<b>Race to the Top Scholarships<sup>3</sup></b>	--	--	68	145
<b>Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)<sup>4</sup></b>	14	21	35	--
<b>Other Scholarships<sup>5</sup></b>	--	--	--	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	16	46	123	179

As these data indicate, NAZ families with birth to five-year-olds have received a total of 179 scholarships or other subsidies for enrolling their scholars in early learning programming, and 123 of those scholarships or subsidies are currently being used.

### What percent of families enrolled in NAZ with age-eligible children have early childhood checklists completed?

NAZ Connectors fill out an "early childhood checklist" with families who have scholars birth to five years old. These checklists include a brief list of resources and activities that NAZ considers essential for developing kindergarten readiness, and are used as a tool for family goal setting.



As the graph indicates, the percent of birth to four-year-old scholars with early childhood goals identified increased from 66 percent at the end of 2013 to 83 percent in the middle of 2014. This increase in the *proportion* of such scholars with early childhood goals occurred despite an increase in the total *number* of scholars in the age range from 231 to 333. By the middle of 2014, NAZ had exceeded its goal of 80 percent of birth to four-year-old scholars having active early childhood goals by the end of 2014.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> NAZ has developed a process in which NAZ families are identified as being eligible for a Race to the Top Scholarship that does not include a wait time during the application process or after.

<sup>4</sup> Data on number of families with birth to five-year-olds ever on CCAP was not available at this time.

<sup>5</sup> According to NAZ Connect, there are no families waiting for or receiving other child care financial assistance.

<sup>6</sup> This information was taken from the *NAZ 2014 Mid-year Dashboard* and provide information on the proportion of families with preschool scholars who had completed early childhood checklists by June 30, 2014.



## Expanding Opportunities and Resources

The Solution Plan defines a process by which NAZ and its Partners systematically review the number of spaces or “slots” available at high-quality early learning programs and the financial resources available to support enrollment in those programs. Elements of the Solution Plan identify a process for responding to these data by:

- Helping existing programs receive 3- and 4-star ratings
- Increasing the number of available slots in new and existing programs
- Coordinating with other early learning initiatives with similar goals
- Creating a task force tasked with developing a multi-pronged approach to working towards increased financial supports for families

The specific process laid out in the solution plan has not yet been implemented. However, many of the activities it articulates are happening in some form (e.g. Think Small helps existing programs receive 3- or 4-star ratings). The data presented below reflect some of the work NAZ and its Partners have done, but may not fully describe efforts in this area.

### How many care and education programs in or near the Zone are rated 3- or 4-star in Parent Aware?

NAZ and its Partners are committed to enrolling NAZ scholars in programs with ratings of three or four stars according to Minnesota’s Parent Aware Quality Rating System. However, to do this there must be an adequate number of high-quality programs to serve these scholars. The following data summarize the number of programs in area codes in or near the Zone (defined as area codes 55411 and 55412) that are at different stages of being rated.

Table 4. Parent Aware rating status for early learning programs in 55411 and 55412

Program Parent Aware rating status	Number of Programs	
	May 2014	November 2014
<b>3 or 4 stars<sup>7</sup></b>	20	23
<b>2 stars</b>	1	3
<b>1 star</b>	0	4
<b>Rating in progress</b>	3	10
<b>Total in rating system</b>	24	40

The number of 3- or 4-star rated programs increased slightly in the 6-month period, while the number of programs with lower ratings or ratings in progress increased by a larger margin. While the goal is to increase the number of programs with 3- or 4-star ratings, it is important to note that once involved in the Parent Aware rating system, programs are supported through a structured quality improvement process to help them obtain a 3- or 4-star rating.

### How many care and education program “slots” exist in care and education programs in or near the Zone, by Parent Aware level and licensure? How many slots have been added in the past year?

According to EAI 6.1.1, the process laid out in the solution plan for assessing enrollment capacity specifies that the action team will assess the “total number of slots in 3- and 4-star center and

<sup>7</sup> Includes programs approved through the Accelerated Pathway to Rating (APR) that is available to accredited child care, Head Start and public school pre-kindergarten programs.

family programs (including MPS and Head Start) in and adjacent to the Zone.” In April 2013, Scott McConnell and Kevin Overson at the UMN’s Center for Early Education and Development prepared a report for the organization MinneMinds that provided an “initial analyses of current capacity and use of school-based early education and family and center-based child care programs in zip codes 55411 and 55412” (access report [here](#)). Data from that report are included below. *Note that this report summarizes data related only to children ages three and four.*

Table 5. *Preschool slots available in early learning programs in 55411 and 55412*

Program Parent Aware rating status	Number of preschool slots in April 2013
<b>3 or 4 stars<sup>8</sup></b>	730
<b>2 stars</b>	0
<b>1 star</b>	36
<b>Rating in progress</b>	45
<b>Not participating</b>	622
<b>Total slots</b>	<b>1,433</b>

According to these data, 51 percent of the available slots for preschoolers are in high quality programs. The CEED@UROC analyses also considered these data in the context of estimates of total number of preschool-age children living in 55411 and 55412. They estimated that a total of 1,553 preschool-age children lived in these zip codes, meaning that there were high-quality programming slots for only 47 percent of 3 and 4 year-old children.

CEED@UROC, in collaboration with NAZ’s early childhood team, is currently creating an updated report reflecting enrollment capacity in 55411 and 55412 in November 2014. This report will be released in December 2014. The data in this updated report can be used to assess change in the past year.

## Parent and Child Preparation for the Transition to Kindergarten

This section is about the extent to which NAZ and its Partners supported parents and scholars as they transition to kindergarten.

### How many/what percent of families with children entering kindergarten next school year are engaged in the kindergarten selection and enrollment process with a Partner and/or NAZ staff member?

EAI 8.1 articulates that early childhood Partners are to offer services that support their scholars’ transition into kindergarten, and that NAZ staff are to collaborate with Partners in order to coordinate alignment with NAZ’s transition to kindergarten process. EAI 8.2-8.5 further articulate what NAZ staff will do to support this transition.

#### *Partners Supporting Transition to K*

Although Partners have been providing a wide variety of services to support their scholars’ transitions into kindergarten over the past year, NAZ is not currently in a position to document specific services provided nor the number of eligible NAZ scholars reached by these services. In

<sup>8</sup> Includes slots for public school pre-kindergarten programs and other accredited child care programs approved through the Accelerated Pathway to Rating (APR), but does *not* include data from Head Start programs as these data were not available.

preparation for future evaluations, it could be useful to gain information from both Partners and families listing kindergarten transition activities and a tracking system to identify these, or other, services in which NAZ families participate (e.g. the number that attend a *Transition to K* family night offered by a Partner).

### **NAZ Supporting Transition to K**

In 2014 NAZ was beginning to roll out its *Transition to K* support services, primarily facilitated by NAZ Connectors but supported by the Early Childhood Navigators and Liaison. The activities consisted of 1) Connectors calling families to support the selection of a school (outreach happened once prior to the due date for school choice cards and again after a placement notice was sent out), and 2) NAZ early childhood team and Minneapolis Public School staff coordinating to hold a NAZ Transition to Kindergarten Event in August for NAZ scholars who were about to start kindergarten. The following data demonstrate how many families were reached via these efforts. Scholars were considered part of 2014 or 2015 kindergarten cohorts based on their birthdate and age eligibility for kindergarten enrollment (i.e., 60 months of age by September 1 of enrollment year).

- 2014 kindergarten cohort
  - Of 100 scholars entering kindergarten in fall 2014, 22 (22 percent) had a NAZ staff member connect with their parent or guardian to provide information on the coming transition (data pulled on 5/20/2014).
  - Of 100 scholars entering kindergarten in fall 2014, 18 (18 percent) attended the NAZ and MPS Transition to Kindergarten event held in August 2014.
- 2015 kindergarten cohort
  - Of 99 scholars entering kindergarten in fall 2015, 8 (8 percent) had a NAZ staff member connect with their parent or guardian to provide information on the coming transition (data pulled on 10/29/2014). This year's transition to kindergarten support process is in its initial stages for this cohort so this low amount is to be expected.

# Evaluator Impressions and Recommendations for Future Internal Evaluations

## Internal Evaluation Process

This is the first formal evaluation of implementation and short-term effects of NAZ's Early Childhood Solution Plan, and only the second example of gathering data to support *Results NAZ*. As with the Family Engagement internal evaluation, we have learned that the broad intention supporting initial design and implementation seems well-considered and strong, that there are challenges in bringing these intentions to reality, and that both the information and processes described here are useful – and can become more useful, robust and detailed over time.

## Ongoing Maturation of NAZ Intervention, Data Collection, and Continuous Improvement

Our team identified two areas of particular interest. First, intervention services provided by NAZ and its partners are still under some degree of development, and are “settling” or maturing to a stable, constant, and rigorous state. As this rapid-cycle development work is completed, careful evaluation of activities over an extended period will be even more useful. Second, we expect NAZ's ongoing data collection efforts to continue refining and improving coverage. As more data (and more reliable data) become available, ongoing program review and reflection will also improve.

## Ideas to Facilitate Future Evaluations

In order to provide a more robust picture of how families are interacting with NAZ and its early childhood Partners, we recommend gathering data about families' experiences with NAZ early childhood supports and services. During the planning meeting for this report, this question was articulated: *To what degree do families with birth to five-year-olds feel supported by NAZ? What would help them feel more supported?* In addition to this question, NAZ staff also articulated that it would be useful to learn more about families' experiences with interruptions in child care access and with the process of transitioning to kindergarten. The Internal Evaluation team is working with NAZ to find a process for collecting this kind of information from families in a systematic and efficient way.

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