Early Childhood Programs with High Returns on Investment

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Principle Elements of Quality Early Care and Education

- Highly skilled teachers
- Age-appropriate curricula and stimulating materials in a safe physical setting
- A language-rich environment
- Warm, responsive interactions
- High and consistent levels of child participation
- Small class sizes and high adult-to-child ratios

Center on the Developing Child
Harvard University
What is a Quality Rating and Improvement System?

- A Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is a state level framework to assess, improve and communicate the quality of early learning and development programs.
- A tool for system reform that has the potential to reach programs that serve a wide range of children and are financed by many public and private sources, including parent fees.
QRIS Can Provide the Following:

- **Quality Assurances**
  - Aligning program and professional standards
  - Assessing and monitoring
- **Supply-Side Intervention**
  - Technical assistance and coaching
  - Professional development
  - Financial supports
- **Demand Side Intervention**
  - Consumer guide to quality
  - Links between quality child care choices and financial incentives
QRISs Include:

- An emphasis on improved children outcomes
- Standards for programs that are believed to affect child outcomes
- A tiered approach to measuring program quality which then guides improvements

The **Goal of a QRIS** is to help child care providers improve their early learning and development program so that the learning and development outcomes for children improve.
QRIS Frameworks

- Program, teacher and learning standards
- Monitoring/quality assurance
- Financial incentives
- Quality improvement supports
- Parent/consumer education/engagement

Mathematica/Child Trends: *Compendium*, April 2010
Standards

• Chosen based on links between standard and program improvement and/or child outcomes
• Linkage supported by evidence or empirical research
• Provider and practitioner expertise

Fundamental Categories of Standards

• Learning environment (can include child assessment, teaching practices, curriculum)
• Staff qualifications
• Staff/child ratios and group sizes
• Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI, process standard)
“We are far enough along in the work of developing QRIS that we can review and revisit our initial conceptual frameworks…. Conceptualization of QRIS as a single intervention is not accurate. QRIS is a hub or umbrella for multiple activities that support quality improvement. Activities that…clearly aim at strengthening child outcomes. But...[activities] that...encompasses [sic] other important outcomes that may only indirectly and over time contribute to children's development. Such outcomes include strengthening families, the professionalization of the early childhood workforce, and strengthening early care and education system. Being explicit about these other outcomes,...will help prevent including too wide a range of quality indicators in validation models predicting to child outcomes.”

Resources


*National Program Standards Crosswalk Tool* (n.d.), by NCECQA
https://occqrisguide.icfwebservices.com/index.cfm?do=crosswalk
