

WHY NY NEEDS QUALITYstarsNY:

QUALITYstarsNY establishes benchmarks of excellence and keeps programs, providers, and funders accountable to the use of public dollars and to the goal of providing all children with transformative early learning experiences.



Background

Interest in early childhood education is at an all-time high. New York State’s New Education Reform Commission embraced early childhood with its “cradle to career” focus and first recommendation to expand prekindergarten. Governor Cuomo has likewise made statewide expansion of pre-kindergarten programs a top priority. And, the United States Congress has joined President Obama to make historic proposals to expand access to quality early childhood services for all children from birth through age 5.

In 2011, the NYS Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), whose 50 members are appointed by the Governor, implemented a well-researched model of quality rating and improvement known as QUALITYstarsNY. The project is coordinated throughout the state by the City University of New York. To date, 500 programs in New York State’s neediest communities have realized a significant benefit from their participation in QUALITYstarsNY.



Problem

The reality is that too many of New York State’s young children attend sub-par early care and education programs. The problem, bluntly put, is that New York State has thus far not factored “high quality” into its current early education expansion plans. And the state’s failure to do so has already exacted a cost to its expansion efforts as federal funding opportunities have been lost.

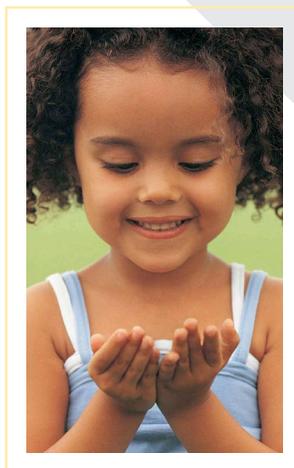
Solution

QUALITYstarsNY – the state’s quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), provides a framework to evaluate and improve the early childhood programs for young children from birth through entry into kindergarten. Similar programs exist in every state in the country, and federal grant competitions (like Race to the Top) look to a state’s QRIS commitment as a key indicator of success or failure.

By focusing on child care centers, family child care homes, universal prekindergarten programs and Head Start sites, QUALITYstarsNY has established quality program standards and then assesses the level of quality that all early learning programs attain. Based on that evaluation, programs receive a star rating and a quality improvement plan. Programs then receive coaching, mentoring, professional development, and other resources to work through their improvement plans. All project activity is monitored and evaluated in an on-going process to ensure high accountability for all parties. Information on all programs is made available to parents and funders alike.

Goal

The goal of providing young children with increased early care and education opportunities is clear. Reaching that goal, however, must be tempered with the realization that more is not necessarily better. The goal needs reshaping: providing young children with more and better early care and education opportunities sets the stage for lifelong success. Early childhood development matters and the quality of early childhood programs matters too.



Promise

Full implementation of QUALITYstarsNY will help make New York State an attractive and sound investment opportunity for all funding sources by ensuring that future early childhood program and future expansion efforts are coupled with the necessary quality enhancements needed to meet future educational challenges, build a quality workforce and spur economic growth.