

**STARTING POINT: State Actions to Incorporate
Issues of Race, Culture, and Language
Into Quality Rating Scoring Systems**

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NOTE: This paper is a starting point in three respects. First, states are at the starting point in developing and beginning to use different measures within their quality rating scoring systems to promote linguistic and cultural competence and equity, learning as they do so. Second, the paper is at best a partial reflection of what states are doing today, drawing from the most readily available resources and doubtless leaving out important state efforts. Third, the paper does not include the experiences states have had in developing and using these measures and their reflections on how they can be levers for greater attention to equity and diversity in early childhood. As a starting point, this paper hopefully will encourage states to add additional measures from their states that this report does not contain and add additional descriptions of the goals and both intended and unintended impacts of their inclusion.

In 2007, the Build Initiative reviewed 16 state Quality Rating Scoring Systems for the inclusion of any quality elements related to program response to issues of race, culture, and language. Build's report, *Quality Rating Systems for a Multi-Ethnic Society*, noted that there were very few instances of such inclusion and, in general, any reflection only occurred through the incorporation of other accreditation scales, such as NAEYC accreditation, that applied only to the highest rating levels in those scoring systems. While many systems made use of the Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) in developing their scores and these included some references to issues of race, language, and culture, those references had minimum effect on the scores programs would receive.

Since that time, the Build Initiative has supported a multi-state learning community on Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), promoting increased attention to addressing issues of equity, inclusion, and cultural and linguistic competence as core aspects of quality care. This has included both plenary sessions and workshops at national QRIS meetings, as well as technical assistance in this area. Many more states have established QRISs, and some states have undergone significant revisions to their existing QRISs.

In November, 2011, 36 states applied to the Build Initiative to receive technical assistance on revising or expanding their QRIS's to address issues of racial, linguistic, and cultural diversity, competence, and equity.

Within those applications, states outlined the current state of their QRIS work with respect to race, language, and culture; and, in some instances, included specific measures they were using within their quality rating scoring systems to reflect these issues. Of the 36 applicants 20 (55.5%) mentioned that their current QRIS included some such elements and 13 provided examples

within their applications. CFPC then sought more information from these and other states on their quality rating score systems to identify specific elements within those scoring systems, examining 19 states and Puerto Rico quality rating scoring systems. While not a comprehensive review of all state QRIS's and their scoring systems, as was done in the 2007 report, the findings show much more intentional activity to address issues of race, language, and culture within QRISs today.

There is not yet a common set of measures that states have used. In fact, states have a variety of approaches to including specific measures. In most instances, participating programs stand to score points and are more likely to be able to achieve a higher quality rating level if they demonstrate they have met the requirements for the quality measures around race, language, and culture than if they have not.

One state (Hawaii) has developed a separate category within its quality rating scoring system specifically about "diversity." That separate category has three discrete measures related to how practitioners: (1) respect and accept individual children, (2) know how to help children become accepting and tolerant of others, and (3) demonstrate respect for diversity in all aspects of program. While other states included different measures within other categories (curriculum, staff qualifications, family engagement, etc.), Hawaii was the only state examined which had a specific emphasis upon program activities that would support tolerance and respect for diversity among children.

Regarding categories related to the program learning environment, two states had measures that spoke to embedded policies or practices in programs. Michigan required a written plan that values children's culture and shows cultural competence. New Mexico required evidence that each child's language and culture are integral components of the daily program.

Five states (California, Georgia, Iowa, New York, Wisconsin) included measures related to the curriculum and its cultural and linguistic responsiveness. New York was one of the most detailed in this respect: "the adopted curriculum/curriculum framework is evidenced-based and reflects the contributions of people of different genders, ages, races/ethnicities, languages, and abilities. Staff receive training and support to implement the curriculum."

In addition, three states (Illinois, Minnesota, and New York), included reference to family backgrounds, cultural norms and traditions, and family culture and home language in intake and assessment processes. Four states (Arizona, Indiana, New Mexico, and Puerto Rico) included measures related to the classroom materials. Arizona's measure, for instance, focused on "program staff partner with families to select and incorporate a variety of materials that reflect the cultures and languages of the children present without stereotyping."

Seven states (Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, and Puerto Rico) included measures related to staff training specifically around cultural and linguistic competence. Colorado's measure was that "faculty staff must earn a certificate, through training, in cultural awareness and sensitivity," while Georgia's was that directors and a share of staff receive at least two hours training in inclusion/special needs and at least two hours training in cultural/linguistic competence, with more points awarded for more training.

New York went further to include measures relating to staff diversity: “When 20% or more of the children are speakers of a particular language other than English, program employs at least one staff member who speaks that language,” and “program philosophy and staff recruitment strategies demonstrate commitment to diversity and having staff reflect its community.”

Regarding family communication and engagement, six states (Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, Michigan, and New York) had measures related to communicating with families, with Michigan’s being one of the most comprehensive: “Communication, education, and informational materials and opportunities for families are delivered in a way that meets their diverse needs (e.g. literacy level, language, cultural appropriateness, etc.).”

Finally, two states (Arkansas and Georgia) explicitly used as a measure the Strengthening Families self-assessment framework for engaging and involving families, which contains many references to culturally and linguistically appropriate responses. Puerto Rico included a general measure regarding family engaging, with criteria for how teachers use teaching and learning strategies that involve families and that demonstrate respect to the culture, values, and languages the children bring to school.” One of the most effective ways to ensure that programs are responsive to the diversity of the children and families they serve is to actively reach out to families and engage them in the program activities and program design.

As this scan shows, the incorporation of measures to gauge the cultural and linguistic appropriateness and quality of early childhood programs within quality rating scoring systems is beginning to develop. States are taking different actions, and with different degrees of specificity. Some are likely to have measurement issues. Not all may have equal impact or validity, as measures. At the same time, however, simply having such measures begins to call attention to the issues, which may encourage providers to take action they otherwise would not or feel recognized and valued for the work they already are doing. Staff development and training measures are likely to produce new orientation and training sessions on these issues and a greater core of trainers with knowledge and skills in these areas.

As states move forward, it will be important to draw upon these experiences and learn from them and what measures seem to be most effective in continuous program improvement on these issues – as second and third generation measures (and their attendant training, technical assistance, and resource supports) are developed.

Examples of Measures Related to Diversity (Race, Language, and Culture) within State QRIS Documents¹

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Quality Rating Scoring System Elements

Diversity as Its Own Category

HI – Practitioners: (1) respect and accept individual children, (2) know how to help children become accepting and tolerant of others, and (3) demonstrate respect for diversity in all aspects of program (additional detail attached).

Learning Environment: Policies and Embedded Practices (2)

MI – A written plan for integrating policies, procedures and practices that reflects a respect and valuing of children’s culture and demonstrates cultural competence.

NM – Evidence that each child’s language and culture are integral components of the daily program.

Learning Environment: Formal Program Curriculum (5)

CA – At tier two, a developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate curriculum.

GA – Program utilizes an age-appropriate curriculum and classrooms, materials, curriculum, and interactions reflect value for children’s home languages, traditions, and culture (evidence of how curriculum reflects the traditions of the children enrolled in program – policy handbook, newsletter, photos, incorporation of children’s home languages, etc.)

IA – The curriculum, activities and structure must provide experiences in harmony with the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of children.

NY – The adopted curriculum/curriculum framework is evidenced-based and reflects the contributions of people of different genders, ages, races/ethnicities, languages, and abilities. Staff receive training and support to implement the curriculum.

¹ This is not a comprehensive review of state QRISs. It includes information derived from the 13 applications for technical assistance to the Build Initiative on cultural and linguistic competence which provided some specific information on measures their current QRIS included: Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Nevada, New York, Pennsylvania, New Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Wisconsin. It also includes reviews of QRIS materials and some actual scoring systems from 13 states (some of which overlapped with the state application list): Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. Altogether, 19 states and Puerto Rico were included in this scan.

WI – Cultural and linguistic competence and inclusion embedded into the curriculum, including developmental screening, family involvement, cultural competence, quality improvement, and strengthening families.

Learning Environment: Intake and Assessment System (3)

IL – Intake forms must document background information about the child and family, including parental preferences regarding child-rearing practices.

MN – Program offers orientation meetings for new parents that include a discussion about their preferences, including those related to cultural norms and traditions.

NY – The [child] assessment system reflects program philosophy, family culture, children’s abilities and disabilities, and home language.

Learning Environment – Materials and Setting (4)

AZ – Program staff partner with families to select and incorporate a variety of materials that reflect the cultures and languages of the children present without stereotyping. Child participates in creative art activities that are a part of that child’s community and culture.

IN – One of 13 items under “classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe” is the environment includes representation of each child and family (including all age groups, abilities and cultures), which might include books, pictures, photographs, music/songs, games, toys, dress-up clothes/materials, and foods.

NM – Positive examples of racial and cultural diversity should be represented in materials, equipment, and classroom displays.

PR – Criteria regarding daily activities that considers whether the center has materials and equipment that allows to foster cultural differences, and whether activities are planned to foster the values, beliefs, experiences, and language present in the family and the socio-cultural diversity present in the community.

Professional Staff: Training, Knowledge, and Credentials (7)

CO – Faculty staff must earn a certificate, through training, in cultural awareness and sensitivity.

GA – Teachers and directors have a working knowledge of instructional practice to support English and second-language learners.

GA – Directors and a share of staff receive at least two hours of training in inclusion/special needs and at least two hours training in cultural/linguistic competence, with more points for more training.

IA – Training plans required that enhance the staff’s skill in working with the cultural characteristics of the children served.

MI – Professional development training attended by early childhood educator includes at least 3 hours (2 for family homes) focused on cultural competence and inclusive practices, related to serving children with special needs or disabilities, as well as teaching diverse children and supporting diverse children and their families.

MN – Staff have completed training in working with families from different cultures and socio-economic levels.

NY – At least half of teaching staff do a self-assessment of cultural competence using a tool, such as the checklist for Promoting Cultural and Linguistic Competency for ECE Personnel from the National Center for Cultural Competence.

PR – Criteria for whether teachers are trained in issues of diversity included. Criteria related to using strategies to understand the family cultural and linguistic background is asked.

Professional Staff: Staff Diversity and Language Capacity (1)

NY – When 20% or more of the children are speakers of a particular language other than English, program employs at least one staff member who speaks that language.

NY – Program philosophy and staff recruitment strategies demonstrate commitment to diversity and having staff reflect its community.

Family Engagement: Communication with Families (6)

AZ – All written communication is translated, either orally or in writing, into the languages of the families enrolled, whenever possible.

FL – At five star level, if a program serves families who speak different languages, the program has established methods of communications with families in their primary language, with written materials and forms in families’ primary language

IL – The provider must speak the parent’s primary language or use resources to communicate.

MI – Communication, education, and informational materials and opportunities for families are delivered in a way that meets their diverse needs (e.g. literacy level, language, cultural appropriateness, etc.).

MN – Program communicates program information in the parents’ primary language.

NY – Program provides parent materials in the parent’s dominant language and at appropriate literacy levels.

NY – When program enrolls children who are English language learners and/or whose families are ELL, program staff greet children and parents in their home languages.

NY – Program uses several external communication tools such as brochures, paid advertising, participation in community events; communication is in languages that are dominant in the community.

Family Engagement: Involvement in Program (3)

AK – For level three, administrator completes Strengthening Families self-assessment for at least 3 or more strategies and facility develops a Strengthening Families action plan and implements at least 1 action step.

GA – Proportion of staff who have completed the Strengthening Families online training; program conducted the online self-assessment and developed a written improvement plan.

PR – Criteria whether teachers use teaching and learning strategies that involve families and that demonstrate respect to the culture, values, and languages the children bring to school.

Note: The Strengthening Families Initiative of the Center for the Study of Social Policy indicates that a number of states, in addition to those mentioned above, are making some movements to integrate Strengthening Families into their QRIS systems. The Strengthening Families self-assessment tools have a substantial focus upon developing culturally and linguistically responsive. CSSP also is revising its program self-assessment to give even greater recognition to issues of diversity.

Other State Activities Related to Addressing Diversity in Quality Rating and Improvement Systems Activities

AZ – First Things First Native Language Enrichment Programs work with families and local communities to share native languages and celebrate tribal cultures, so children can take pride in their heritage and carry forward. The soul of every culture is carried in its language. Native languages keep the beliefs, history and heritage of a people alive for future generations, and must be preserved.

CA – Established descriptors for five tiers of family engagement – from communicate (1), to educate (2), to involve (3), to engage (4), and to partner (5), with different examples of what programs do at those levels with respect to language and culture (additional detail attached).

FL – Many pilot sites have worked to infuse cultural and linguistic competence into training offerings and to provide needed training opportunities in Spanish.

IL – Professional development services have been created to support early childhood educators that explicitly address, race, culture, and English and dual language learners.

IL – State has sponsored a “train the trainer” session on the Race Matters curriculum.

MN – Parent Aware website includes a button to allow parents to convert the website into the following languages: Somali, Spanish, and Hmong. The Minnesota CCR&&R Network provides live phone interpretive services to providers for Somali, Spanish, and Hmong.

PA – PA has a guide on “Good, Better, Best” Practices that contains a variety of examples at the better and best level which incorporate linguistic and cultural issues.

PA – PA is working with Build and the Annie E. Casey Foundation to better evaluate racial equity and diversity among early childhood programs, with use of the Race Matters toolkit with early childhood programs.

WI – DCF has translated YoungStar documents into Spanish and Hmong.

Hawaii Diversity Attitudes, Skills, and Knowledge (ASK)

Rationale: Children thrive in an environment where their individuality is supported and they are understood in the context of their family and culture.

Summary Statement: The competent early childhood practitioner respects the diversity of their children and families with whom they work and recognizes and appreciates their shared commonalities.

1. Respect for Children and Families. Competent early childhood educators **respect and accept individual children and their families.** They ...

- 1.1 Respect and are sensitive to diversity among groups of people in society and among the children and families in their program.
- 1.2 Respect individual race, gender, ability, age, language, family, culture, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religion, values and beliefs.
- 1.3 Accept a variety of beliefs and values without compromising their program's philosophy.
- 1.4 Recognize and appreciate the commonalities that are shared among staff, children and families.

2. Acceptance of Individuality and Teaching Tolerance. Competent early childhood practitioners **understand and accept individual characteristics** of children and families and know how to **help children become accepting and tolerant** of others. They ...

- 2.1 Know and use accurate information about the diverse characteristics of children and families in their programs.
- 2.2 Understand the development of attitudes, preferences, and prejudice among children.
- 2.3 Actively teach tolerance and respect for differences to young children.

3. Respect for Human Diversity. Competent early childhood practitioners **demonstrate respect for human diversity** in all aspects of their program. They ...

- 3.1 Acknowledge children of all backgrounds and abilities as valuable individuals and contributing members of the group.
- 3.2 Consider the family's values, beliefs, and individual needs in making program decisions.
- 3.3 Support children in developing positive attitudes toward human differences.
- 3.4 Implement strategies to counteract stereotypes and biases in children.

California CAEL QRIS Five Tiers of Family Engagement Descriptions Related to Race, Language and Culture

Tier 1: Communicate

The first tier is characterized by respectful, two-way communication between the teacher and family members who drop off and pick up the child. ... Where written information may be

present, is not accessible to *all* families (e.g., those who do not speak English or those who are illiterate).

Tier 2: Educate

When families enroll in the program, they receive written information about the program's administrative policies. Written information is accessible to all families – that is, materials are translated into languages spoken by participating families, and/or translators are available to enable families to access the information. ...

Programs begin the process of working with the child in the context of the family at enrollment, for example, by asking families about children's history, educational background, then family, and its culture. ... However, information tends to be generic and may exclude families with different compositions (such as families with two same-sex parents, single-parent families, homeless families).

Tier 3: Involve

Prior to enrollment, families are offered the opportunity to observe the program before and during the child's placement. Although the invitation is meant to help families to choose a program that fits with the families' values and culture, this purpose is not clearly stated. ...

Programs seek family input on cultural programming and linguistic diversity, such as requests for cultural artifacts, family photos, or signs in the family's home. ...

Families may provide information to the program and other families about topics including the family's observation of how the child learns, the family's goals, family concerns, family language, and cultural practices.

Tier 4: Engage

Home learning activities are tailored to the child's ability and family interest and contribute to achieving the shared goals set by the program and family. ...

Programs seek family input on cultural programming and linguistic diversity, and these ideas are incorporated into the curriculum and ongoing program activities.

Tier 5: Partner

No additional specific mentions.

Policy Recommendations for the "Family Involvement" QRIS Element:

5. Cultural and language competency should be integrated into all family involvement strategies.