



Considerations for an efficient, inclusive and implementable Quality Rating and Improvement System

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Background and rationale

At the heart of a standards-based system of early learning and development are three sets of standards that are most effective when connected and aligned. These are:

1. *learning and development standards for children* – often called ‘early learning guidelines’ that describe children’s learning across content areas and progress in domains of development.
2. *practitioner standards* – the core knowledge and competencies that qualify adults to work with young children, expressed as credentials (degrees, certificates, licenses), which vary by program type and funding source and are often presented together as a career lattice.
3. *program standards* – the criteria that permit programs to operate (licensing rules) or receive certain funding (State Pre-kindergarten standards, Head Start Early Head Start Program Performance Standards) and standards that define good to excellent practice such as national accreditation and the progressive levels of a State’s Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

QRISs have the potential to harmonize and unite the range of practitioner standards and the various program standards and to integrate early learning guidelines (ELGs) into practice. QRISs also have the potential to promote reflective practice and continuous quality improvement in all types of early learning and development programs, in the program and among practitioners.

A QRIS is inclusive when it is intentionally designed to include the full range of program types and settings. For example, an inclusive QRIS respects and uses the standards and criteria of various programs’ accountability systems as part of its procedures. One metric of inclusiveness is the proportion of programs of a given type that choose to enroll in the QRIS. Steady or increasing proportions are evidence of inclusivity.

The efficiency of a QRIS is directly affected by several factors, such as the following:

- The number of criteria in the QRIS, and the ease or degree of difficulty in verifying them, determines the amount of time and effort for providers to document their status and the time and effort of the state to assess and score each piece of documentation.

- The number of on-site assessment tools and amount of time necessary to complete each contribute to the overall time and effort.
- The levels at which on-site assessments are conducted (all or some levels) expands or reduces the number of assessments that must be completed.
- The duration of a rating determines how often on-site assessments are repeated and other sources of evidence are updated.
- Using the status of a program in another accountability system, e.g., Head Start, national accreditation, state-funded preschool, as the source of evidence for criteria in the QRIS can reduce both the documentation burden on providers and state effort (time and expense).

Considerations in QRIS Design

A QRIS is an intentionally transparent definition of the progression of program quality from basic to excellent. The challenge is to clearly state the progression of quality (the continuum of quality improvement), while keeping documentation efficient and manageable for all types of participating programs, and for the state and others operating the system.

A well-designed QRIS clearly includes the '3 sets of standards' noted earlier. The state Early Learning and Development Standards are introduced in the lower levels and practiced in the top levels, in curriculum, child screening and child assessment items. The progression of practitioner credentials is apparent in the levels, with the top matching the state's preschool program teacher standards (assuming they are high enough). Programs that have met other high quality standards, e.g., Head Start and national accreditation, are recognized at the higher levels.

One major purpose of a QRIS is to recognize quality and promote a culture of continuous improvement among providers. The rating is not a destination; it is a set of benchmarks along a pathway of ongoing improvement. Another major purpose is quality assurance or accountability. Another is to provide families comparative information about program quality to inform their selection of programs for their children. Ultimately, the long-term expectation is that a well-designed, financially sustainable and fully implemented QRIS will have generally positive effects and promote better child outcomes.

Structure

All QRIS have standards and at least 3 levels (most common is 5). The standards that comprise the QRIS will be better understood, and the overall presentation of them is made simpler, by grouping related items into categories rather than presenting a list. Common categories found in QRIS are learning environment (including curriculum and assessment), personnel qualifications, leadership and management, family engagement. A recent addition to the common categories is health promotion, largely because of the emphasis on it in the recent Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant competition.

There are 3 common structures: blocks, points and hybrid. Block structures require all items at one level across all categories to be met before advancing to the next level. Blocks are based on the concept that quality is cumulative and progressive; this structure assures that programs on the same level are similar. Points systems on the other hand, are based on the concept that quality can be expressed in a variety of ways based on a program's strengths. Providers desire to show their unique strengths and families appreciate the information. Generally, to assure some equivalence within a given quality level, points systems require that points be earned in each category of standards. The total points earned determine the level. More recently developed QRIS have combined these approaches, making a hybrid model. Generally the lower level(s) are blocks and points are earned across categories to reach higher levels.

Value and Clarity of Standards

QRIS Standards are norms or expressed expectations of program quality. Criteria are further specifications of a standard, providing finer definition. Standards and criteria need to be:

1. *Understandable and significant* – participants and consumers know what the standards mean and that they matter.
2. *Evidence-based* – there is substantial evidence that a standard is related to program quality and/or positive child development, and ultimately to child outcomes such as school readiness.
3. *Measureable and feasible to monitor* – standards can be monitored well considering accuracy, cost and time;
4. *Progressive* – items are not 'yes/no,' but rather represent gradations of improving practice from acceptable, good, better to best.

Another consideration is whether standards are:

1. *Achievable* – within reach for some portion of providers presently or
2. *Aspirational* – high goals to reach toward, not immediately achievable by most providers

The standards can be more easily understood if they are presented so that the progression is clear and the documentation or sources of evidence for meeting them are specified.

If the standards are in a grid or chart, the column next to each item usually contains the sources of evidence for that item.

Transparency of any 'Status' Pathways

The status of a program (e.g., Head Start in full compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards, currently accredited by a national organization) can be the source of evidence for a particular item, or the pathway to a certain level in a QRIS. These need to be explained so that the rated pathway requirements are understood along with those for the 'status' pathway.

Level 4: meet all of the following	Level 4: Accreditation or Head Start status plus
1. Overall score on applicable Environment Rating Scale (ERS) of 4.25 or higher	
2. Use research-based aligned curriculum with lesson plans showing connection with state Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS)	1. Use research-based aligned curriculum with lesson plans showing connection with state ELDS
3. Complete Let's Move checklist and use results in improvement plan	2. Complete Let's Move checklist and use results in improvement plan

There is substantial evidence that accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) compares favorably to compliance with Head Start Performance Standards. The state of Connecticut created a detailed crosswalk of NAEYC accreditation standards and criteria with the Head Start Program Performance Standards, which found overall 95% match between the two systems (CT DOE, 2008). Other states have also developed such crosswalks. These provide an approximation of the relationship between Head Start standards and NAEYC (and sometimes other) accreditation systems; however there is currently no official document that can be referenced as a crosswalk between NAEYC and Head Start standards.

Note that the NAEYC Academy is currently engaged in a collaborative dialogue with the federal Office of Head Start to explore ways that documentation collected by programs as part of the Head Start performance review process may be accepted as evidence for NAEYC accreditation purposes. The goal is to streamline programs' experiences seeking and maintaining NAEYC Accreditation and acknowledging common features across the assessment processes of both systems.

Validate Accreditation Alignment with QRIS

If a QRIS plans to include one or more national accreditations, there needs to be evidence for their inclusion. This should cover both the standards and the accreditation procedures. Generally crosswalks of each accreditation with the QRIS standards and criteria are developed and documentation of assessment and rating procedures, validity and reliability, etc. of the accreditation system are confirmed. Pennsylvania has adopted a protocol for an accreditation system to apply to be a Recognized Accrediting Organization. The protocol is at <http://www.pakeys.org/uploadedContent/Docs/Early%20Learning%20Programs/Keystone%20STARS/KS%20NatI%20Accreditation%20Protocol.pdf> The details begin on page 2 of the document. The procedures include the accrediting organization creating a crosswalk to demonstrate how its standards align with those in Keystone Stars.

This appears to be an efficient way for a QRIS to recognize accrediting bodies and have them make the effort to demonstrate their fitness for inclusion in a state's QRIS. Further, this approach respects the accrediting organization's copyright and trademark. Each accrediting

body differs as to whether and to what extent its materials are made available. For example, NAEYC makes its Accreditation Standards and Criteria available on the web and in book format and encourages their use by programs for self-study and in the context of technical assistance with programs. Any other use requires a written license agreement with NAEYC stating the purpose, intended audience and use of the materials. In general with any copyrighted materials, whether accreditation standards or program assessment tools, it is best practice to contact the organization and/or publisher and request permission for use.

Determining Scores on ERS, PAS and CLASS

The ERS is widely used in QRIS at least in part because it is a family of tools covering all ages of children from infants through school-age and both family and school/center types of settings. It is a measure of the environment covering a range of aspects of quality, represented as subscales. There is some concern that the ERS is not structurally valid, that is, the seven ERS subscales do not measure seven distinct aspects of quality. Several studies indicate that the scale may actually measure two or three distinct factors (Cassidy et al., 2005; Gordon et al., in press), generally one factor related to materials and the environment and another factor related to teacher-child interactions.

The Program Administration Scale (PAS and its complement, the Business Administration Scale [BAS] for family child care providers) measure a range of aspects of program practices pertaining to personnel, financial management, strategic planning, marketing, technology, family partnerships as well as staff qualifications and child assessment; there are 10 subscales. These tools were explicitly designed so that an overall score of 5 on either is equivalent to being accredited by NAEYC or NAFCC respectively. Thus, if NAEYC accreditation is a pathway to the top level of the QRIS, the PAS scores for a non-accredited program reaching the top level ought to be close to +/- 5.

Further, both the ERS and PAS were designed so that scores of 7 are aspirational goals. The practices at the 7 level are meant to illustrate the highest (excellent) practice, attainable by very few, if any, programs. No QRIS should set expectations for scores of 7, and perhaps not even 6, on the PAS or ERS.

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is a tool that measures the quality of teacher-student interactions on 10 dimensions in three broad domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization and Instructional Quality. Like the ERS and PAS, the CLASS uses a 7-point scale for scoring. The evidence linking CLASS scores and child outcomes offers some guidance on establishing threshold levels on two of these domains (Burchinal et al., 2009). Social outcomes were strongly associated with the quality of teacher-child interaction once scores on Emotional Support reached 5 and above. Academic learning outcomes were associated with scores above 3.25 on Instructional Quality. QRIS can consider this information to set scores for CLASS. A note of caution: the pilot evaluation of Minnesota's QRIS (Parent Aware) found no differences by star level on any of the 3 domains of the CLASS in preschool classrooms (Tout, et al., 2011).

Group Size and Ratio

Group size and the ratio of adults to children are both strongly related to measures of program quality and to improved child outcomes. The evidence is substantial over many studies and many years. This is why state regulation usually includes one or both. QRIS in states that have group sizes and ratios that are unfavorable or not present in their licensing rules often include these in their QRIS standards. This is especially true if the process of directly improving the content of state regulations has been difficult (or impossible). Context matters.

For example, New Mexico has one of the earliest QRIS and one that incorporates licensing rules as the bottom tier. Over time, the licensing rules have been raised when the large majority of programs were able to meet the QRIS level above them. This has happened twice so far, much improving circumstances for children in all settings. New Mexico regulates ratio but not group size. Thus “improved ratios and group size” are part of the next to the top level in New Mexico’s QRIS. These high level expectations closely match the current regulations in some states.

*New Mexico Aim High (Level 4)*¹

6 weeks through 24 months	1:5 (10)
2 years.....	1:8 (16)
3 & 4 years	1:10 (20)

The question to ask before adding group size and/or ratio to a QRIS is: are our state regulations on group size and ratio in the acceptable range? Having basic regulations that are more favorable than another state’s QRIS top level is one metric to judge the fitness of ratio and group size. The most common metric used to answer that question is the NAEYC accreditation standards and criteria. See http://www.naeyc.org/files/academy/file/Teacher-Child_Ratio_Chart_9_16_08.pdf

The NAEYC chart includes a range of group sizes for children of different ages. Recognizing the financial impact of changing ratios and/or limiting group size, the minimum acceptable number of adults and maximum number of children for each age group from NAEYC are displayed below, compared to a hypothetical state’s licensing rules.

Age of children	NAEYC Accreditation (limits)	State X center regulations	Comparison
Infants	2:8	3:12	same ratio, larger group than NAEYC
Ones	3:12	3:15	1:4 vs. 1:5, larger group than NAEYC
Twos	2:12	2:16	1:6 vs. 1:8, larger group than NAEYC
Threes	2:18	2:20	1:9 vs. 1:10, slightly larger group than NAEYC
Fours	2:20	2:20	same ratio and group

Note that ratio within group size is always assessed but is not a required criterion in NAEYC accreditation. A program must meet 80% of all criteria within each of the 10 standards to

¹ Aim High Essential Elements at a Glance, page 8.

https://www.newmexicokids.org/content/caregivers_and_educators/aim_high/docs/AIM_HIGH_Essential_Elements_at_a_Glance_2009.pdf

achieve accreditation, meaning this criterion may not always be fully met by an accredited program, if it meets 80% of other criteria in this standard (Leadership and Management).² The “80% rule” is reasonable since meeting every criterion among hundreds of high standards is not possible or perhaps even desirable. However, meeting a high proportion in each of the 10 standards areas ensures a program is comprehensively of high quality. It is similar to the rule for inter-rater reliability on assessment tools; 85% is necessary for research and high-stakes decisions such as QRIS ratings; 100% is not an achievable goal.

Changing ratios and group sizes should be done with caution. Since they are related to each other, it is not easy to change one without changing the other. The financial impact of changing ratio and group size can be severe. For example, a group of 16 two-year-olds has a teacher and an assistant. Assume the annual staff compensation cost is \$3,600 per child. To meet NAEYC standards, the ratio would change from 1:8 to 1:6 and the group size would be reduced to 12, thus increasing the staff cost per child to \$4,800. Further, given that a center has a fixed amount of physical space, reducing group size means the non-personnel costs are now spread among fewer children, raising the per child cost to families (and other payers).

Maintaining ratio and changing group size has somewhat less severe consequences. For example, a group of 12 infants has a teacher and two assistants. Reducing group size to 8 (same ratio) means one less assistant. The teacher’s cost was shared across 12 children and now will be shared across only 8, raising the per child cost. Again, given that a center has a fixed amount of physical space, reducing group size means the non-personnel costs are now spread among fewer children, raising the per child cost.

If dependable financial support can be offered that covers the additional costs of ratio and group changes, then programs may be more likely to try to achieve better ratios and smaller groups. Reimbursement rate bonuses are not sufficient since by definition they will only address the cost of the subsidized children. Further, most centers do not charge tuition at rates that actually cover the cost of infant care as it would be unaffordable; rather the costs are shared (cross-subsidized) by charging more than the actual cost for preschoolers and less than actual cost for infants and toddlers. Parents are unlikely to be able to afford a 15-20% price increase.

An unintended consequence of group size and ratio changes for infants and toddlers may be that centers with a strong desire to be better will choose to drop infant-toddler care and concentrate on improving the rest of their program.

If improving ratios and decreasing group size is determined to be desirable, and financial support is forthcoming, the change should be phased in slowly over time, for example, decreasing the group size by one child every year over the number of years necessary to achieve the desired goal.

Trade-offs between compensation and staffing are inevitable. Consider that it may be possible that having better qualified staff can substitute for reducing group size. The practice in other

² It is notable that programs achieving NAEYC accreditation overwhelmingly meet much more than 80% of criteria in each standard.

nations, e.g., France, is that a very highly qualified (and compensated) teacher can teach a large group of children as long as there are at least one additional staff member(s) (not as highly qualified or paid) who assist with the ‘housekeeping’ aspects such as serving food, setting up and cleaning up activities, dressing, toileting, etc.

Proceed with caution and full discussion of the pros and cons before including group size and ratio in QRIS standards.

Documentation for child screening, child assessment and curriculum

Many QRIS include criteria on curriculum, developmental screening and child assessment, usually “aligned with the state’s EL&D standards.”

An efficient approach is for the state to develop a list of approved curricula and a procedure for approving curricula that are not listed. Generally, this is a task that the early childhood unit in a state education agency undertakes. Once established, the ‘use of research-based’ curriculum is documented by using a curriculum on the list or by applying for approval of a different one.

A similar procedure can be developed for screening and assessment tools, beginning with those which are already supported by training or recognized in another state system such as state-funded pre-kindergarten. These would be the foundation of a state-approved list of assessment systems. Similarly, the state can establish an approved list of screening tools and procedures for approving on a case-by-case basis other screening tools and child assessment systems.

Several states’ QRIS have procedures for approval of curriculum, screening and assessment. Minnesota is one example. For the curricula that are approved for Parent Aware, see http://www.parentawareratings.org/files/Parent_Aware_Aligned_Curricula.pdf. Minnesota contacts the publisher of a curriculum to request that they provide all the information to demonstrate the alignment of their curriculum with the state’s criteria. For the procedure for curriculum approval see: http://www.parentawareratings.org/providers-educators/download/Guide_curriculum_approval_process_final.pdf.

Efficiency: Self-Assessment

One way to increase QRIS efficiency – and to promote continuous quality improvement – is to focus on self-assessment that leads to quality improvement plans. The assessment tools should be relevant to the QRIS standards, and especially include any tools that will be reliably assessed at higher levels of the QRIS. Some states are introducing tools such as The Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Family Strengthening Self-Assessment, and various cultural competence checklists such as those from the National Center on Cultural Competence or NAEYC.

The typical progression of self-assessment and quality improvement planning in a QRIS is by levels, with documentation for each step. This can be accomplished in either a block or a points system. A block approach might be:

- Level 1: Introduction to the various tools and how to use each for self-assessment.
Professional development attendance can be documentation.

Level 2: Program conducts self-assessments and uses the results of all assessments to craft a Quality Improvement plan with identified focus areas. The plan is submitted as documentation or attested to and kept on-site for review.

Level 3: The Quality Improvement plan is revised annually or bi-annually, to show progress and re-focus on areas for improvement. Documentation can be the progress report and/or the new focus areas.

This progression can work with tools that are intended to be reliably assessed at higher levels. If more than one tool is used, it may be most efficient to have both be self-assessments at the same levels (the lower ones) and then via reliable assessment at the highest level. It is not only inefficient to conduct reliable assessments at lower levels of a QRIS (because of the cost of assessments for increased number of sites and classrooms) but scores at the lower levels are likely to be low. Getting low scores that are public is demoralizing to providers. Getting low scores that are not public and that lead to improvement plans offers support for improvement and eventually a sense of satisfaction for progress made. If a program at Level 3 in a 5 level QRIS legitimately believes it has ERS (or other) scores based on its self-assessment that would place it higher, then create a procedure to allow a program to request a reliable assessment.

The typical progression in a QRIS of practices for implementing standards on curriculum, screening and child assessment is similar to the progression for program self-assessment. The first step is learning about, then choosing one, getting training on using the selected one, and finally implementing in lesson planning and/or reporting to families.

Efficiency: Validate self-assessment and self-report

Self-assessment is an efficient approach to use in a QRIS. However no rating should rest on a self-assessed score on a tool that is designed to be assessed by trained reliable independent observers. Self-assessment scores are meant to educate providers about aspects of quality and inform the development of program Quality Improvement plans. Validation is good practice in general and increases reliability and trust in a QRIS.

To check the accuracy of self-assessment, a random sample of programs that have submitted self-assessments are assessed by trained observers. The time between the two assessments should be as short as possible so as to minimize error due to natural changes in practice from year to year. For example, as a program is coming up for renewal, the reliable assessment is completed. If significant discrepancies in the two scores are found, the details should inform the design (re-design) of the training on self-assessment for that particular tool and the subscales or items where discrepancies were found.

Similarly, self-report is efficient and needs to be validated. Many items in a QRIS can be documented by written policies, handbooks, forms, portfolios, etc. Such documentation is acceptable when it exists and its content matches the criteria in the QRIS. Generally a rubric is developed for determining acceptability. Self-report saves the program from having to copy or scan and submit all these items and saves QRIS staff from having to review each item for acceptability. Instead, periodic checks can be done on samples using the rubrics.

One principle for validating self-report is that all criteria for which self-report is used are sampled over time. Another is that all program types are sampled at all levels of the QRIS.

Once collected and analyzed, these data will show which items are generally met at a high degree of acceptability and which are not, and whether certain program types are more prone to error or omission. This will make clear which items actually need to be reviewed i.e., those that are most often not present or inadequate. This validation process needs to be repeated on a multi-year schedule. The periodic check can be done by having the program transmit the documentation or by on-site inspection by an assessor as part of some other visit, e.g., licensing. The results may also point out training needs.

Efficiency and effectiveness: Continuous Quality Improvement

One widely-accepted purpose of a QRIS is to promote and nurture a culture of continuous quality improvement (CQI) in programs. Improvement is a process informed by evidence and guided by benchmarks. To support continuous improvement, a QRIS can promote self-assessment within its standards and provide opportunities for learning how to use these results and other evidence to improve the program. Similarly, a QRIS can offer support for developing the key elements of reflective practice for practitioners and work with program leaders to support this through supervision and apply the same principles at the program level.

Reflective programs engage their constituencies (staff, families and governing body) in the process of program self-assessment, and interpretation and use of the results for improvement. When this becomes a familiar and valued part of the culture of a program, a culture of continuous improvement is being established. The NAEYC self-study process that precedes application for accreditation is one example.

Professional development can be constructed to focus on the CQI process directly. CQI concepts can be incorporated into the training that is offered on program assessment tools, curricula, screening and child assessment. Some QRIS leaders have begun to discuss whether CQI could become a distinct standard within a QRIS, that is, conceptually a 'process standard' rather than the usual standards that focus on practice or content or status. Such a standard would bring together the self-study, reflection and program improvement planning aspects of QRIS.

Efficiency: Automate Documentation

Another way to increase efficiency is to import verified data from existing databases as documentation for QRIS standards. For example, the greater the alignment between the state Workforce (Professional Development) Registry structure and data definitions and the qualifications in the QRIS, the easier it will be to import data. The Registry can be the source of evidence for staff and director qualifications if it has the capacity to produce reports by site (workplace). Can it produce a report by site documenting all the staff and director qualifications are met? Can it produce a report by program or only by individual practitioner?

To promote efficiency using Registry data requires that participation in the Registry be required for programs entering the QRIS. Some QRIS make this a progression from the first or second level. At that level, the requirement is simply that all staff have profiles in the Registry. At succeeding levels (or higher points), where percentages of staff with various qualifications must be demonstrated, the Registry report on the program site is documentation. Site-based Registry reports can help licensors as well, saving time spent going through files looking for documentation of qualifications.

Inclusion

Creating or expanding the 'status' pathways to the top levels of a QRIS immediately makes it more welcoming and potentially more inclusive. Accredited programs or Head Start programs fully compliant with the standards that govern their funding are valued by the QRIS. These programs only have to document items that are not included in their accountability monitoring system.

Further, Head Start programs have CLASS scores that might be used as documentation. Using those scores (if they are reasonably current) promotes inclusion toward a truly cross-sector QRIS as well as saves resources that would otherwise be spent on conducting reliable assessments for programs that already have them.

QRIS is a site-based rating system that often includes classroom-based scores, e.g., from the ECERS and/or ITERS or the CLASS. The ERS and the CLASS are classroom-based. The scores across classrooms that are assessed are averaged to get a site score. The PAS is site-based but does include one classroom-based item (staff qualifications).

Multi-site organizations present a set of issues for any QRIS. Multi-site organizations with central management include large Head Start grantees, shared service alliances, school districts with multiple preschool classrooms in different schools, among others. QRIS is a site-based rating system, so each site must earn a rating and the ratings may differ from one site to another even though all are managed by one organization.³ The QRIS is not providing an overall rating of an entire school district's early education program; it is rating each of the individual schools that have early childhood classrooms.

Consider a multi-site child care agency. The classrooms of the multi-site agency can be assessed using the same procedure as for a single-site program; there are just more of them to be assessed. The sampling rubric is applied to each site, selecting the classrooms to be observed. While the PAS is site-based, many of the items it includes are logically met at the central administrative unit of a multi-site program, not at each program site. The PAS can be parsed to distinguish items that are met at the central level fully for all sites (e.g., fiscal management) and those that must be confirmed for each site (but not directly assessed at the site) and those that are met logically at each site (staff qualifications by classroom).

³ Program accreditation is also site-based and presents the same issues.

To make a QRIS truly inclusive of multi-site organizations will take some effort to sort through the issues and develop procedures that both support validity and do not increase documentation burden.

Use Data to Inform Changes

States have made good use of QRIS data to inform changes in their QRIS. For example, Indiana's QRIS validation study found expected association of overall ERS scores with rating level as well as a pattern of low scores on one subscale among all QRIS levels (Elicker, 2011).

Any QRIS that has been in operation for several years has data. The data include the specific evidence documenting items, and likely also ERS scores and perhaps other measures with reliable scores, as well as data on overall ratings. These can be used to answer questions like:

- What level did Head Start programs attain compared to other center-based programs?
- Which subscales (or items) on ERS are frequently met or not met?
- Do infant-toddler classrooms score similarly to preschool classrooms on ERS?
- How do classrooms score on the interaction items in ERS compared to scores on the CLASS?

Conclusion

Developing an effective and efficient QRIS that generates high participation from all sectors of early care and learning is a balancing act. How high should the standards be to really define excellence? What is the right balance between considerations to increase participation and setting standards too low? The desire to set the highest standards competes with the fact that they may be unachievable currently. Balancing validity and efficiency is ongoing. Fortunately, QRIS are state-determined policies that can be changed as necessary, and generally are revised. And QRIS generate much useful data that can be used to inform change. If early QRIS states are a guide, a QRIS will be altered regularly every three to five years, based on experience, advances in practice and data analysis.

Many states took the opportunity to revise their QRIS for the Early Learning Challenge grant application. Now those states, especially those that were awarded funding, can build on the work and relationships forged in that process to make their QRIS be the best it can be for children, families, providers and the state.

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