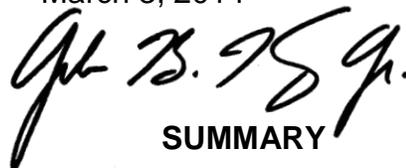




TO: P-12 Education Committee
FROM: Ken Slentz 
SUBJECT: QUALITYstarsNY
DATE: March 3, 2014
AUTHORIZATION(S): 
SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

Expanding access to high-quality early learning opportunities has been a key priority of the Board of Regents. The use of QUALITYstarsNY, New York State's quality rating and improvement system, assures parents and others access to the best possible care and education for their youngest learners.

Proposed Handling

This issue will come before the P-12 Education Committee for discussion at the March 2014 Board of Regents meeting.

Background Information

QUALITYstarsNY is New York's common, statewide, tiered quality rating and improvement system for early childhood programming. It is overseen by the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)¹ and is part of larger effort to improve the quality of New York's early learning and development system. QUALITYstarsNY was developed over several years through a public/private partnership that involved all major stakeholders, including all participating state agencies and was designed to

¹ The establishment of the New York Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) occurred in May of 2009. This came as an outgrowth of the federal Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007 that required Governors to designate or establish a council to serve as the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care for children birth to school entry. Membership of the Advisory Council was specified in the Reauthorization Act, as was its responsibilities. The Governor appoints the membership of the Advisory Council. The final design and implementation of QUALITYstarsNY, as New York's quality rating and improvement system, became the responsibility of the ECAC under the leadership of the NYS Council on Children and Families.

closely align with New York's creation of a comprehensive early childhood education professional development system called *New York Works for Children*. Important features of QUALITYstarsNY include a common protocol for the assessment of program quality and fiscal oversight, professional development, and technical assistance resources for supporting program improvement and rewarding program success.

Underlying the design of this system are New York State's child care regulations which, in 2009, were rated by Child Care Aware as the second most comprehensive set of regulations in the country following only behind the regulations that govern military operated child care programs². QUALITYstarsNY then provides the framework for defining and improving quality in our early learning and development system. QUALITYstarsNY does this by providing early learning and development programs (ELDP) with a tiered set of Program Standards that reflect research on the characteristics of high-quality services that lead to improved outcomes for children. By setting universal program standards linked to STAR ratings, QUALITYstarsNY uses proven methods to assess, improve and communicate the quality of early childhood education provided to our children. The Program Standards are divided into four categories: Learning Environment, Family Engagement; Staff Qualifications and Experience; and Management and Leadership. Programs complete a self-evaluation and are then evaluated by independent evaluators hired and trained by the New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute at the City University of New York (PDI) using an environmental rating scale. Resources are made available to support continuous improvement.

QUALITYstarsNY is designed to include all settings where children receive care and education, including informal family child care and all programs and providers that are regulated by New York State agencies. These include: center-based programs, family and group family child care, school-age care programs, Early Head Start and Head Start centers, Universal Prekindergarten (New York's state funded prekindergarten program), Early Intervention center-based programs (Part C of IDEA), Preschool Special Education Programs (Part B of IDEA), and registered nonpublic nursery schools. QUALITYstarsNY is part of larger effort to improve the quality of New York's early learning and development system.

In 2009, the Office of Children and Family Services dedicated \$1.2 million in ARRA funds to field test QUALITYstarsNY. This field test included 272 sites, located in 13 communities, representing the geographic, demographic, and cultural diversity of New York. The ECAC oversaw the design and implementation of the field test. It was managed by PDI and evaluated by the Center for Assessment and Policy Development, in partnership with the National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbia University and Cornell University. The evaluation team's final report was completed in April 2011.

² Child Care Aware of America, *We Can Do Better: Ranking of State Child Care Center Regulations and Oversight Report, 2013 Update*.

Once the field test was completed, the ECAC's Quality Improvement Workgroup responded to the evaluation findings by revising the standards, changing the distribution of points, and making critical policy and procedural implementation decisions. Efforts then began to implement the system statewide. These efforts were supported by the State Education Department dedicating \$4 million from its successful 2010 Race to the Top Grant to QUALITYstarsNY. New York is one of the few states that describes their public education system as beginning in Preschool. Therefore, it is not surprising that New York is the only state to use a portion of their Race to the Top P-12 funding to support quality improvement in early childhood education. The Race to the Top funds support the expansion of QUALITYstarsNY in 328 Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs) in the neighborhoods surrounding 67 Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools located in high-need communities across the state. In addition, \$1.3 million in funding from the ECAC and private foundations supported the continued participation of 100 programs and providers that participated in the field test and another 15 programs in other high-need communities.

Panel Discussion

The panel listed below will discuss how QUALITYstarsNY has improved their respective programs, how they are utilizing the Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core Standards, and how QUALITYstarsNY is providing resources to help parents work with their children as well as make better-informed choices about the early care and education environments they choose for their children.

Panel Members

Ola Friday, Project Coordinator with the New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute where she coordinates the implementation of QUALITYstarsNY, New York State's quality rating and improvement system. Ola brings to this work knowledge of public policy analysis and early childhood education policy.

Melissa Hasty, Early Childhood Coordinator, City School District of Albany. Melissa oversees and provides professional development and support for all UPK and Kindergarten classrooms in her district in addition to coordinating QUALITYstarsNY at the district level and running Family Literacy Events to strengthen home-school partnerships.

Tammy DiCocco, UPK Director, Cohoes Community Center. Tammy has been the Day Care Director at the Cohoes Community Center since February 2001. She oversees the UPK program for the Cohoes City School District and the preschool curriculum as the UPK Director. The Center has participated in QUALITYstarsNY since 2010.

Victory Lynn Riedy, Founder of Victory Child Care, Inc. Victory operates an Accredited Program from the National Association for the Education of Young Children and has been involved in early care and education since 1989. Victory has been a UPK

provider for the City School District of Albany since 2010 and is working with the district to expand the program through the recent Priority Full-day Prekindergarten and Expanded Half-day Prekindergarten Grant Program for High Need Students.

Discussion Questions

- How long has your program been involved in QUALITYstarsNY?
- Does your program offer UPK?
- How has QUALITYstarsNY improved your program? What are the benefits of participation?
- Is there a specific example of a program standard that you are working on as part of your Quality Improvement Plan?
- How has QUALITYstarsNY helped with parent communication?
- Is your program's curriculum aligned to the NYS Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core Standards?
- How has the NYS Prekindergarten for the Common Core Standards, in conjunction with participation in QUALITYstarsNY, improved the learning experiences for the prekindergarten students you are working with? Can you elaborate on how the academic and program standards have helped students with disabilities or who are English Language Learners?

Next Steps

A top priority of the Board of Regents is to expand Prekindergarten through additional UPK funding for initiatives like the Full-day and Expanded Half-day Pre-Kindergarten grant, by continuing to meet our current obligations under Race to the Top, and to continue our collaborative cross-agency work. To ensure maximum impact of these programs on our youngest learners, the Department and our agency partners will continue to focus on quality programming as well as equitable access. Without such focus, the impact of early childhood programming on the success of our youngest learners will be limited. Accordingly, the Board of Regents included in their state aid proposal a request for additional funding for continuation and expansion of UPK and support of QUALITYstarsNY.

In an effort to improve quality care in early care and education settings, the Department staff will work together to compare the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness with the QUALITYstarsNY Program standards, and identify areas in which they align.