



QRIS: A Lever for Early Childhood Systems Reform

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The Challenge

- Uneven program quality and inequitable access to quality
- A fragmented early childhood system
 - Multiple infrastructures
 - Fiscal inefficiencies
 - Confusion among families



The Challenge

- Achievement gap begins in infancy
- Disparities in early language acquisition and emergent literacy skills
- ECE system underfunded, unprepared to take on literacy tasks at any scale



Systemic Solution

The multitude of programs and the infrastructures that support them need to come into alignment with one another to create a more coherent, aligned and efficient ECE system (Kagan & Cohen, 1997).



QRIS as Alignment Tool

QRIS can mitigate these disparities by aligning program and practitioner standards with early learning literacy standards



QRIS as System Builder

- Old thinking: QRIS as stand-alone quality initiative for “child care”
- New thinking: framework for a coordinated state ECE accountability system



Elements of QRIS

- Program standards
- Monitoring/quality assurance
- Financial incentives
- Quality improvement supports
- Dissemination of ratings

Mathematica/Child Trends: *Compendium*, April 2010

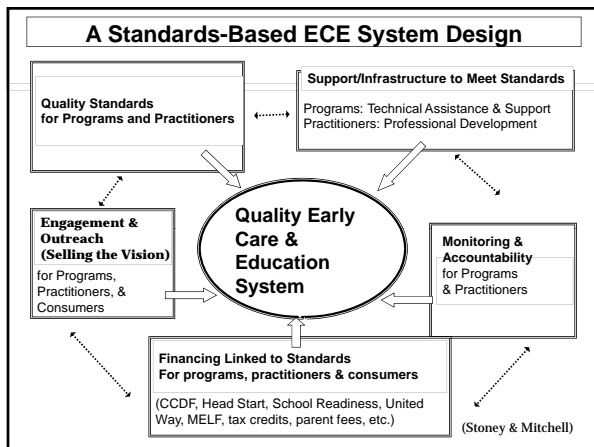


QRIS Across ECE Sectors

- All serve licensed centers
- Most serve Head Start, Pre-K and Licensed family child care programs
- Growing number serve school-age as well
- Majority are voluntary
- Only moderate number of programs served in most states

Mathematica/Child Trends: *Compendium*, April 2010





QRIS as State ECE Accountability System

- Creates program quality standards aligned with early learning and practitioner standards
- Enables collection of data on quality which:
 - Can guide families' ECE choices and funders' decisions on quality improvement
 - Provides a rationale for policy-makers for increased investments and a way to track their effectiveness
 - New investments can be used to strengthen infrastructure to support ECE quality

(Mitchell, 2009)



Policy Questions

- What role should K-12 educators play in the design and implementation of QRIS?
- What role should each state department play in ensuring that QRIS program standards align with early learning standards?



Policy Questions

How can state child assessments and QRIS data systems be coordinated with those used by K-12 to create a more comprehensive picture?



Alignment Challenges

- How “ready to align” are K-12 districts and state departments?
- Which approaches to literacy should QRIS support – and who decides?
- How best to coordinate professional development and technical assistance to support shared goals?



Research Needed

- How well-aligned are state QRIS standards and K-12 standards currently?
- How are different standards and levels of quality related to key child outcomes?
- Does system coordination result in better outcomes for young children?



QRIS National Learning Network

For more information, visit
www.qrisnetwork.org

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