



**New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council
Initiatives Update
June 27, 2013**

QUALITYstarsNY – QUALITYstarsNY – As of June 25, 2013 there are 259 centers/public schools and 159 family homes participating in QUALITYstarsNY. These programs have completed Standards Self-studies using the QUALITYstarsNY program standards. Participants were able to indicate the standards they met and submit documentation. The on-line Resource Guide is being used as a tool to support providers through the on-going The team of Rating Reviewers continue to review the submitted evidence and issue Provisional Ratings. A separate team of Environment Rating Scale Assessors are observing classrooms and family homes using the family of scales. Observations will continue through the summer and the results will be used to update Quality Improvement Plans. Resources are available to support the material and supply needs highlighted in the ERs assessments and also to support staff professional development needs.

Common Metric - New York University researchers are in the process of examining the three most commonly utilized formative child assessment systems (Work Sampling System, Child Observation Record, Creative Curriculum GOLD) to create a Common Metric (utilizing item response theory) aligned to all three assessment systems (Phase 1). Once developed, the Common Metric will function as a tool that takes data from different assessments and communicates results in a common language, enabling program leaders and policy makers to understand trends across delivery systems. The Common Metric will enable early childhood education programs to retain their autonomy and use tools they have already invested in while contributing to geographic and programmatic understanding and analysis of the progress children are making.

The Common Metric will be aligned to the New York State Early Learning Guidelines, NYS Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core, and the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework, allowing early childhood providers using any of these three major formative assessment systems to determine their children's' progress against these separate benchmarks. In the 2012-2013 school year, authentic assessment data will be collected from approximately 10,000 preschoolers across New York State during three checkpoints (fall, winter, and spring).

NYU recruited (with the help of Phil Alotto and Patty Persell) 20 Head Start programs from across New York State to join the Common Metric project. Participating programs will enter into a data sharing agreement that allows the common metric team at New York University to access de-identified data for the 4 year olds that will be assessed in participating classrooms. In an effort to support teachers in their use of assessment data, participating teachers will be provided with coaching and support (via three one-hour phone calls) related to their assessment tool, and will be provided with guidance about how to use their assessment data to inform instruction.

Shared Services Alliance – The ECAC is supporting the development of shared services program call ECE Shared Resources. ECE Shared Resources is an easy to use web-based platform offering a wealth of tools, programs and services to help early childhood education centers and home-based providers manage their programs more efficiently and effectively. ECE Shared Resources saves time, reduces costs and improves quality.

The NYS Association for the Education of Young Children and the Early Care and Learning Council has continued to meet with the advisory group that was established to oversee implementation of this project. We have now finalized the state specific content and links to be included on ECE Shared Resources and the contractor, CCA Global, is working now to finalize the site with the New York state content. A beta test will be conducted with approximately 50 individuals selected from focus group participants and others selected based on their role in the field including: Technical assistance and professional development providers, Head Start programs, center- and family-based child care providers. The beta test will be conducted during July and August with an official launch of the site to follow in September.

Thank you to the members of the advisory group for the time and commitment: Shari Gruber, Claudia Siegman, Kate Smith, Karen Trobvich, and Stephanie Woodard

Work Group Updates

Data Development Work Group – The Data Development Work Group met last month to review the revised proposal for developing an early learning data system. The proposal was designed to provide an iterative approach to building the data system so that it could be done gradually over the course of several years allowing the state to spread the considerable costs of developing the system over a longer time period. A significant decision that needs to be made before going forward with the proposal is which agency should house the system. Because it is hoped that the early learning data system will be linked to P-20 Longitudinal Data System, it makes sense that State Education Department serve as the host agency. Work group members suggested that a meeting be set up with the Longitudinal Data System Administrator to determine their receptivity to taking on this role. The Work Group also reviewed and approved the benchmarks that were developed to measure their progress.

Finance Work Group – On December 14, 2012 the Finance Work Group hosted a Financing Strategies Forum to discuss the feasibility of various financing strategies that have the potential to support early childhood services within New York State. Following the forum, work group members convened to discuss how to use the material presented at the forum to support the development of financing strategies that will support the early childhood systems. The work group decided by developing guidance on blending and braiding of funds would support program directors in strengthening and expanding their programs..

Based on this decision, the Finance Work Group will be working with the Sparks Policy Institute to develop:

- **New York State Guide to Blending and Braiding Funds:** This guide will provide information and technical assistance on blending and braiding funds to support early childhood systems. This guide is intended as a practical tool to help identify and understand the funding sources associated with supporting early childhood system which will help organizations and communities to plan and develop financing strategies by using a blended or braided funding model. The guide will contain detailed definitions on blending and braiding and actionable information on how to develop blended and braided financing models.
- **New York State Guide to Financing Home Visiting:** This companion piece to the New York State Guide to Blending and Braiding Funds would focus specifically on blending and braiding strategies that could be used to finance home visiting in New York State. Sparks will work with the New York State Home Visiting Work Group to develop the Guide. The Home Visiting Work Group is led by the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy and includes representatives of state and local government and non-for-profit organizations who administer home visiting programs within New York State. Sparks will work with the Home Visiting Work Group to identify relevant funding streams, conduct an analysis of each funding stream to determine how it can be used to support typical program activities, and develop a guide on how to access each funding stream, appropriate uses of the dollars, limitations, and tips for the blending and braiding process. In addition, the guide will incorporate strategies that are currently being examined and implemented nationwide.

In addition, the ECAC Early Childhood Cost Estimation Model is in the final phase of development and the Return on Investment component of the model is being implemented. As the contract with APA will come to a close, a request has been made to allow APA to provide the following services:

- Host the website that contains the cost model, and provide general maintenance and technical support.
- Create issue briefs to help communicate results of the model and policy implications. Topics for briefs could include the total investment in early childhood in New York, the return on investment for specific policy changes, and the financial implications of increasing quality.
- Update the cost model data.

Benchmarks: The Finance Work Group will develop a process that will engage: ECAC members, work group members, fiscal and policy staff, and advocates, and other policy groups to use the cost model in developing their own estimates. To generate interest, the cost model will be demonstrated amongst the various groups. The demonstrations will focus on opportunity to incrementally increase funding (early childhood comprehensive program expansion with elements necessary to ensure intended results, developmental screening, mental health consultation, home visit); and Identify funding to support the cost model.

Work Over the Next Six Months:

1. Finalize the cost model testing
2. Publicizes the cost mode amongst ECAC members, work group members, fiscal and policy staff, and advocates
3. Implement the Return on Investment component into the cost model
4. Develop the braiding and blending guides

Promoting Healthy Development Work Group - The Promoting Healthy Development (PHD) Work Group is building capacity among the providers in child-serving systems to improve the health and social-emotional development of young children. This includes identifying and responding to the social-emotional needs of young children and their families, promoting health and safety through the development of training and consultation, and identifying opportunities to collaborate with public health programs.

During this reporting period, the Promoting Healthy Development (PHD) Work Group has been engaged in a variety of projects that continue to incorporate health and social-emotional development into the overall work of the ECAC. The work group met monthly by phone to review on-going projects receives updates and hears about outside reports and events that can impact the work of the group. Work Group projects include the following:

- **Social-Emotional Development Group:** During this period, the ECAC completed a contract with The Children’s Institute at the University of Rochester. Children’s Institute is known as a center of excellence for the social and emotional health of children and offers diverse programs and resources to school districts, community based organizations and others. Through this contract, Children’s Institute brought extensive knowledge and resources to the PHD Work Group’s projects related to social emotional development.

In consultation with the PHD Work Group, Children’s Institute developed materials and products in several areas: social-emotional development promotion, prevention and intervention for the many professionals who work with young children and their families.

The Work Group is reviewing these extensive materials and exploring how they can best be used by those in the field - for professional development and other purposes. Promoting Healthy Development will share this information with ECAC work groups and request suggestions for how the ECAC might best use these valuable resources.

- **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Participation Group:** The ECAC has completed an effort to increase participation in CACFP as part of the work of the Promoting Healthy Development Work Group. There was an increase in inquiries to the Department of Health based on the ECAC led recruitment effort beginning in the fall of 2012. Since September 1, 2012, 192 center-based programs and 1,110 family child care centers enrolled in CACFP.

Staff from the Work Group and the Department of Health met to discuss the expected outcomes for each project and how they were related. It was concluded that each project is working toward one similar objective: *to increase participation in CACFP.*

A consultant developed and administered a survey instrument to recent CACFP participants. In early 2013, a series of interviews were conducted with early care and education providers in order to gain insights on how to improve the recruitment and retention of in-home providers in the Child and Adult Food Program (CACFP). Participants included forty-three (43) license exempt, registered family child care and group family day care providers who had recently enrolled in CACFP from 6 upstate counties. The providers surveyed shared many ideas for improving CACFP which covered the range from the importance of the program, specific improvements that can be made, and ideas on how to increase enrollment. Providers who participate in CACFP do so for reasons that go well beyond the financial compensation, although this assistance continues to be an important factor. The providers in the study valued making a contribution to the nutritional health of young children and setting them on a path to healthy eating habits.

The survey findings have been produced in a one-page handout that has been distributed to CCR&Rs, center- and family-based child care providers. The Department of Health has worked closely with Work Group on this work and in studying how the results can inform changes to their work.

Benchmarks: The Work Group held a face-to-face meeting in April that was well attended by Work Group members and guests. Two groups were organized to take the work to the next level for both social emotional development and screening. Each group identified priorities and developed key recommendations for moving the work forward. The groups looked at areas for changes in: professional development, infrastructure, partnerships and practice change. The

May meeting was devoted to looking more closely at the social emotional components of change and plans are underway to engage with other ECAC work groups.

Quality Improvement Work Group – During this reporting period, the Quality Improvement Work Group held two large-group conference calls (May and June) and one face-to-face meeting (April). The organizational structure of seven sub-groups allows for maximum participation of work group members and optimizes the ability of each sub-group to accomplish tasks.

Sub-group Updates:

- **Standards:** This sub-group conducted two focus groups to solicit feedback from a selected group of school-age child care providers about the newly-released draft standards for program quality. An electronic feedback system is available at www.qualitystarsny.org.
- **Professional Development/Technical Assistance:** This sub-group is working on the development of Clarification Statements for each of the standards so that programs and providers can learn more about the importance of each standard and why it is an important element of program quality. In conjunction with the Clarification Statements, the group is also researching additional tools, resources and websites to post in conjunction with each standard. It is anticipated that these resources will be of benefit to any and all programs and providers of early care and learning programs, regardless of their participation in QUALITYstarsNY.
- **Evaluation, Data, Monitoring and Accountability:** This sub-group is developing an evaluation plan for the implementation of QUALITYstarsNY. Using existing resources, and the expertise of a cadre of volunteers, the group is establishing the priority research questions for the project. Specific attention is currently directed to the development of an appeals process for QUALITYstarsNY.
- **Communications:** This sub-group is developing the tools and resources that will be used to conduct community outreach to parents and other family members of young children. They were instrumental in developing targeted marketing materials to reach school-based early childhood programs to recruit them for QUALITYstarsNY participation in the high-needs communities surrounding the persistently low-achieving school districts in New York State.
- **Cultural Competence:** This sub-group received support from BUILD to continue work on improving the effectiveness of the QUALITYstarsNY program standards in meeting the needs of, as well as being responsive to, all children and their families.

Work over the next six months:

- Continue to add resources and tools to the QUALITYstarsNY website which offer guidance to center-based and family-based early care and learning program providers interested in improving quality.

- Work with the BUILD technical assistance team to assure that QUALITYstarsNY program standards are sufficiently sensitive to a diverse community of children, parents and providers.
- Develop written materials that communicate the importance of a quality early learning experience for all children.
- Create relevant evaluation and research questions to gather information and provide much-needed feedback to QUALITYstarsNY about implementation practices.

Strong Families Work Group - The Strong Families Work Group focused on the following activities:

Family Engagement Initiative: The work group formed three subgroups to adopt the Center for the Study of Social Policy's (CSSP) Strengthening Families three "Levers for Change" as a framework for organizing their work going forward: 1. Parent Partnerships; 2. Professional Development; and 3. Policy and Systems. The work group will utilize the work of the subgroups to determine a product (or products) for certain audiences (e.g., policy makers, child care providers, home visitors, etc.).

The policy and systems subgroup finalized a five page guide: "Family Engagement: Getting Started". This guide has been distributed at the NYSAEYC Infant and Toddler forum in April 2013 and also at the New York State Parenting Education Partnership (NYSPEP) Spring Meeting and Training Institute, May 30, 2013. Strong Families Work Group continues to seek ways to expand their audience and educate more early childhood professionals on the benefits of family engagement. For example, the New York State Family Engagement Coalition has recently agreed to join the Strong Families Work Group.

Dr. Mary McKay, a national expert on family engagement, has been hired to develop a web-based training tool that would outline components of successful family engagement practices/strategies.

QUALITYstarsNY: The Strong Families Work Group continues to support QUALITYstarsNY by providing resources and best practices pertaining to the Family Engagement section of the QUALITYstarsNY standards. The input from the Strong Families Work Group will be used to inform the implementation of QUALITYstarsNY and the work group will be available to respond to feedback from the early childhood field on what resources were valuable and what other assistance early care and education providers would find useful.

- **New York State Home Visiting Coalition:** The work group is supporting the efforts of the NYS Home Visiting Coalition, which include discussions around systems and

infrastructure building, the sharing of best practices from other states, and proposed legislation to embed home visiting in statute.

- **New York State Parenting Education Partnership (NYSPEP):** The work group supports the work of the New York State Parenting Education Partnership (NYSPEP) to promote and improve positive parenting practices through the following activities:
 - Strong Families Co-Sponsors NYSPEP Training Institute May 2013 – With the financial support of the ECAC, Strong Families Work Group co-sponsored the NYSPEP Training Institute on Family Engagement. Dr. Mary McKay was the keynote speaker and presented strategies for family engagement. Over 100 participants attended the training followed by a panel discussion led by Patty Persell, Director of NYS Head Start Collaboration Project, NYS Council on Children and Families; Erika Brunelle, Family Engagement Specialist, Center for Development of Human Services, SUNY Research Foundation; and Vito Borrello, President, Every Person Influences Children. The presentation was video recorded and will be made available for viewing via the ECAC website.
 - New Parent Kit – The Parent Guide component of the New Parent Kit has undergone preliminary design and layout in preparation for parent focus groups which will be held this summer. The focus groups will be used to inform the final design and content of the guide. The NYSPEP New Parent Kit Work Group is also working to develop an electronic version of the Kit that will be hosted on the revised NYSFamilyresources.org website. Discussions are taking place with potential partners, including the Institute for Healthcare Advancement who produced the *What to Do When Your Child is Sick* guide to determine the inclusion of additional content on the website as part of the electronic version of the Kit.
 - Community Cafés – Currently, work is being done to develop a Parent Leadership Team for New York that will provide technical assistance to the 17 Community Teams that are hosting Cafés in their communities. Parents are being recruited from Community Teams in the Rochester, Auburn and New York City areas. Once formed, the Parent Leadership Team will help host a post-project Appreciative Inquiry interviews and will also help plan an event to bring teams together to share their experiences. The mid-project report, which outlines the work of the teams to-date, can be found at the link below.
<http://ccf.ny.gov/ECAC/WG/StrongFam/Resources/CommCafeReport.pdf>
 - Parenting Education Credential – In 2012, NYSPEP introduced a Parenting Education Credential to New York State. The Parenting Education Credential defines consistent criteria for the knowledge, skills, and experience needed by all parenting educators. Credential levels accommodate novice, intermediate, senior and master parent

educators; each level requires the parenting educator to demonstrate increasing levels of competence. The Credential is for all those who support families and facilitate the growth and development of parents through support and education, regardless of work setting or job title. In the first year and a half, over 60 NYSPEP members received one of the first three tiers of the credential. Tier four of the credential is now completed and will be piloted in the first quarter of 2014. NYSPEP has held several free 2-hour Parenting Education Credential Orientation webinars as the first step in the application process.

Work over the next six months to include:

- Strong Families Work Group will continue to work with Sam Stephens to refine the system change benchmarks.
- Strong Families Work Group will continue to support and offer guidance to QUALITYstarsNY regarding family engagement.
- Strong Families Work Group will continue to work to develop a webinar on family engagement as a training/orientation tool for staff in early childcare agencies and organizations.
- Strong Families Work Group will continue to promote family engagement strategies through the ECAC website, ECAC newsletter and other outlets to reach a wide range of early childhood professionals.

Work Force Development Work Group

The Workforce Development Work Group is organized to advance the components of an Early Learning Workforce Professional Development System and respond to related issues such as coordination of pre- service education in early childhood (i.e., articulation agreements among institutions of higher education); recruitment, retention, continuing education, and compensation for early care and education professionals. Work Group members have been working to create and implement a competency-based professional development system through a variety of related activities. These activities include:

- **The Core Body of Knowledge and Early Learning Guidelines** - The revised *Core Body of Knowledge* and New York State's *Early Learning Guidelines* were reprinted during this period. Some of the 10,000 copies were distributed to the state's early childhood faculty at colleges and universities. This was done to reinforce the work group's efforts to engage with higher education faculty and professional organizations and encourage the use of these documents in teacher preparation coursework. Also during this period, a parent guide to accompany the *Early Learning Guidelines* was completed. The guide has

been written as a letter to parents and teachers, encouraging them to think and talk about children's development.

- **Higher Education** – Progress has been made in two projects involving institutions of higher education. The first project, Higher Education Community Based Partnership, is a pilot between colleges and community-based partners in two locations. The goal is to encourage early care and education practitioners to pursue college level training and degrees, to be intentional about their continuing education, and to experiment with innovative ways to reach this audience with appropriate educational supports. The second project is in collaboration with University of California- Berkeley to inventory higher education resources and examine access to those resources. Three modules of exploration are proposed: (1) map institutions with departments offering early childhood education, and the degrees/certifications offered; (2) identify program goals, content, and age focus of course offerings; and (3) gather information on faculty experience and formal and applied education.
- **New York Works for Children: New York's workforce website, registry and career lattice** - The website *New York Works for Children*, www.nyworksforchildren.org, serves as a vehicle for communicating to the field about the ECAC's efforts to fully develop the state's career development system for early childhood education. It includes access to Aspire, the workforce registry for New York State early education professionals. Teachers, directors, family childcare providers and trainers can use this online system to keep track of their employment history, education, ongoing professional development, and contributions to the field. Directors can also keep a complete profile of their program staff. Programs that intend to participate in QUALITYstarsNY develop an Aspire program profile, along with profiles of program employees, as an essential first step in preparing for participation. Finally, the Registry is a cost effective tool for licensors to review staff qualifications and training to determine regulatory compliance.
- **Early Learning Challenge Grant Announcement-** The Work Group began discussing opportunities for work force development made possible with the third round of the Early Learning Challenge Grant competition. Specifically the 4th bullet in the proposal: "States will set high quality standards that ensure that preschool programs incorporate several important elements..." Concerns include appropriate assessments, developmentally appropriate practices in Pre-K, and the cost of raising teacher qualifications; the Work Group spent time during this period discussing policy

implications of each in preparation for the discussions that will be held in coming months to prepare a New York State application.

- **Child Care Development Fund** – The Office of Children and Families’ Division of Child Care Services asked the Work Group to provide input into drafting the goals for the workforce section of the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). The Work Group’s professional development priorities that affect home-based, center –based and school age child care are consistent with these CCDF goals:
 1. Align training and technical assistance opportunities with the Core Knowledge and Competencies,
 2. Develop a process for evaluating the quality of technical assistance providers (coaches, consultants, mentors, and professional development advisors) and that would build upon the existing Trainer Approval System.
 3. Increase the number of professionals on the NYS Early Childhood Career Ladder after their qualifications are verified through ASPIRE.
 4. Develop training modules that include a coaching component on how to: (a) use the Core Knowledge and Competencies to build Individual Professional Development Plans and (b) access training aligned with Core Knowledge and Competencies to meet professional development goals.

Survey the scope and components (including course design, field experience, and student assessment) of each 2-year, 4-year, and graduate early childhood program throughout the state to prepare for future Core Competency alignment and articulation work. Consensus of the group was that the proposed goals are challenging but worth achieving.

Benchmarks - During this period, the Work Group has focused on five benchmarks related to the Early Learning Trainer’s Registry and Credential; Core Body of Knowledge; Early Learning Guidelines; increasing credentialed professionals; and an event approval process. These benchmarks are aligned with activities that lead to high quality learning opportunities for active professionals and students entering the early care and learning professions.

For the next six months, the Workforce Development Work Group will:

1. Develop a distribution plan for the Parent Guide to the Early Learning Guidelines, with input from the Strong Families Work Group.
2. Contribute to the New York State application of the Early Learning Challenge Grant competition, specifically the priority component that focuses on early childhood workforce.
3. Continue to promote the benefits of enrolling staff in the Aspire database.

4. Continue to promote and support the Early Learning Trainer credential and those trainers who have attained it.
5. Provide oversight on the two innovative higher education projects: Institutions of Higher Education/Community Partnerships and Cal-Berkeley Inventory of Higher Education.
6. Develop a system for assessment, review and approval of training opportunities that are determined to meet high quality standards of practice for early childhood programs.
7. Begin to review existing video resources for inclusion in an on-line library of training resources.
8. Provide feedback and encourage input from the field on the CCDF goals.
9. Contribute feedback to the Promoting Healthy Development Work Group on a training proposal to integrate social emotional development competencies into professional development guidance and opportunities for early care and learning practitioners.