



Implementing QUALITYstarsNY

QUALITYstarsNY is the framework for recognizing and improving the quality and effectiveness of early learning and development programs in New York. QUALITYstarsNY, like other quality rating and improvement systems throughout the country offer clear, organized ways to assess, improve and communicate the quality of early learning and development programs. When QUALITYstarsNY is fully implemented statewide:

- ★ children in NY will enter kindergarten healthy and ready to learn;
- ★ early childhood educators and programs will be supported to provide excellent services that are recognized for their quality; and
- ★ parents will have a simple way of learning about the quality of their early learning and development options so they can make the best choices for their children.

2010 and 2011

QUALITYstarsNY was field-tested in thirteen communities across the state in 2010. The reports on the field test and its evaluation are available at www.qualitystarsny.org. Field test results have been used to revise and improve aspects of QUALITYstarsNY. In 2011, the QUALITYstarsNY standards were revised based on the field test and standards for school-age programs began to be developed.

In 2011, over half (138) of the centers, schools and homes that participated in the field test and developed quality improvement plans (QIPs) were supported to continue implementing those plans, with primary support from federal funding provided by the NYS Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) and the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). The OCFS funds specifically support professional development for field test participants; these *Quality Scholars* funds are allocated in accord with program QIPs. With private funding in Buffalo, 8 additional programs were added to the project and benefited from the components of quality rating and improvement. Additionally, together, all of the programs in Buffalo engaged in an innovative strategy, modeling a peer support network.

Approximately 90% of the work to implement QUALITYstarsNY has been funded with federal dollars through both OCFS and the ECAC, and 10% through private philanthropy.

2012 and 2013

The QUALITYstarsNY center/school- and family-based standards are complete and posted on the QUALITYstarsNY website.

The NYS Education Department (SED) agreed to allocate funds from its federal Race to the Top grant to support implementation of QUALITYstarsNY in 2012-2014. About 300 early learning and development programs in the communities around persistently low achieving public schools will be involved. The focus in 2012 is expected to be recruitment of program participants and outreach and engagement of partners to work with these programs to conduct assessments, develop QIPs and support implementing those plans. Ratings of programs in these communities will not be published until 2014.

In 2012, with private funding, QUALITYstarsNY will be implemented in two communities on Long Island, again enabling new programs to participate in QUALITYstarsNY. The learning community model will be replicated in these two communities as well.

Implementing QUALITYstarsNY through 2012 is supported entirely by time-limited federal funds and private philanthropy. ECAC funding will expire in 2013 and SED funds will decline in 2013 and end in August 2014. State investment is necessary for QUALITYstarsNY to continue.

QUALITYstarsNY has adopted the State’s 10-region structure for economic development to guide implementation, meaning that whenever possible, activity will occur in each of the regions as implementation proceeds. A multi-year implementation plan and budget have been developed; the expected total annual investment needed for full implementation statewide is approximately \$100 million.

Implementation of QUALITYstarsNY is proceeding with emphasis on readiness, quality improvement and development of necessary infrastructure.

Readiness. QUALITYstarsNY is currently implementing three readiness training workshops designed to help programs become more familiar with the standards and using the Environment Rating Scales for self-assessment and program improvement. The workshops are entitled:

- ★ *Introduction to QUALITYstarsNY*
- ★ *Self-Assessment: Preparing for Program Improvement (using the Environment Rating Scales)*
- ★ *First Steps for Quality Improvement*

24 trainers were trained to facilitate the three workshops and they will deliver 90 sessions across the state in all 10 regions. These sessions have the potential to reach 2,000 programs and providers. This work is being coordinated by the Early Care and Learning Council.

Quality improvement. In support of quality improvement efforts, OCFS allocated \$400,000 towards Quality Scholars in 2012. The peer mentoring network continues in Buffalo and will begin on Long Island. Quality Improvement Specialists assist participating program staff to identify high quality and tailored professional development that is designed to advance program quality according to Quality Improvement Plans.

Beginning in 2011, some of the child care resource and referral agencies (CCR&Rs) funded by OCFS have allocated a portion of their technical assistance resources to support programs that are implementing QIPs and several CCR&Rs are delivering readiness sessions. Other publicly funded entities, such as the Early Childhood Direction Centers and BOCES can also play a key role in contributing support to the implementation of Quality Improvement Plans in the future. Further integration of these potential partners requires consideration of current contracts, and the length of time necessary to revise, approve, and issue new RFP's. In the case of our current CCR&R partners, change in state law is needed to permit a new kind of partnership model.

Infrastructure development. The QUALITYstarsNY data system will be completed in 2012. The QUALITYstarsNY data system will automatically import workforce data from the *New York Works for Children* Registry. The Registry is expected to be completed in 2012 as well. Once both the Registry and the QUALITYstarsNY data system are inter-operational, programs anywhere in the state will be able to apply online, develop a preliminary Quality Improvement Plan and estimate their QUALITYstarsNY rating. QI specialists will be able to enter and track their work with programs.

For information about QUALITYstarsNY please visit our website at:

www.qualitystarsny.org

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What is QUALITYstarsNY?

QUALITYstarsNY is a voluntary quality rating and improvement system that is designed to increase quality in early learning settings - centers, schools, and homes - throughout the state, using uniform evidence-based standards. It applies a five-star "rating system," much like those used for hotels and restaurants, to indicate the level of quality with the goal of better informing families and promoting better outcomes for children. Research shows 75% of brain growth and 85% of intellect, personality and social skills develop before age five – making the early years a critical period for preparing children for school and for life.

Do other states have such a system?

Yes. Since Oklahoma and New Mexico launched the first systems in 1998, more than 30 states have adopted a quality rating and improvement system. New York joined the ranks by first conducting a field test and now launching its implementation of QUALITYstarsNY.

What will QUALITYstarsNY tell me about the quality of a program?

The initiative looks at how well an individual program or provider implements the program standards, which include an appraisal of the interactions between the children and teachers, the teaching environment and curriculum, professional development for staff, family engagement and on-going efforts to demonstrate best practices to support children's learning and development.

What are the benefits?

QUALITYstarsNY will provide a clear, organized, cost-effective way to assess, improve and communicate the quality of New York's early care and learning programs. QUALITYstarsNY will benefit:

- ★ CHILDREN - by creating stronger learning environments and opportunities, rooted in proven research and effective techniques
- ★ PARENTS - by helping them become more savvy consumers in choosing high quality early care and learning programs
- ★ EARLY CARE AND LEARNING FIELD - by creating explicit expectations and providing guidance and assistance to improve the quality of services
- ★ POLICYMAKERS - by instituting evidence-based uniform tools to guide more efficient and effective use of resources to support early care and learning services
- ★ TAXPAYERS, LEGISLATORS and DONORS - by establishing accountability and a cost-effective system that maximizes the state's investment

Who can participate?

QUALITYstarsNY is designed as a voluntary program, open to early learning and development programs and providers in all settings, including early childhood centers, family and group family child care homes, Head Start, and Pre-Kindergarten programs--located in schools and community based settings.

Who oversees QUALITYstarsNY?

- ★ QUALITYstarsNY began as an initiative of early childhood experts and advocates, drawing on the experience of other states as well as national trends. The initial planning and development was supported with federal grants and private foundations. The New York State Office of Children and Family Services and the State Education Department are actively involved in the design and implementation.
- ★ QUALITYstarsNY is overseen by the state's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), an advisory body comprised of early childhood professionals from the public and private sectors, charged with building a stronger early care and learning system for New York State's children. The ECAC contracts with the NYC Early Childhood Professional Development Institute for day-to-day implementation of QUALITYstarsNY.
- ★ In the future, authority and responsibility for major components of the system will be determined through an RFP process conducted by NYS Early Childhood Advisory Council. Program and provider assessment, professional development and technical assistance, data management, outreach, marketing, and financial supports to programs and providers are segments of the system that will require governance.

Who was part of the QUALITYstarsNY field test?

Completed in 2010, the field test was conducted in more than 200 early learning settings in 13 communities across the state: Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo, Chemung County, Clinton & Franklin Counties, Long Island, Onondaga County, Rochester, Rockland County, Westchester County and three communities in New York City.

How is QUALITYstarsNY funded?

The initiative has been funded through a combination of federal funds and private foundations. The initial investments supported development and design of QUALITYstarsNY as well as the field test. Some federal funding is available through the Early Childhood Advisory Council to continue to plan for full implementation. Plans are underway for the State Education Department to provide a \$4 million dollar investment in QUALITYstarsNY via the Race to the Top grant. Spread over three (3) years, these resources will target early learning programs (center-based and family-based) located in communities with Persistently Low Achieving Schools (PLAs).

Where can I learn more?

Go to www.QUALITYstarsNY.org and sign up for the electronic newsletter.

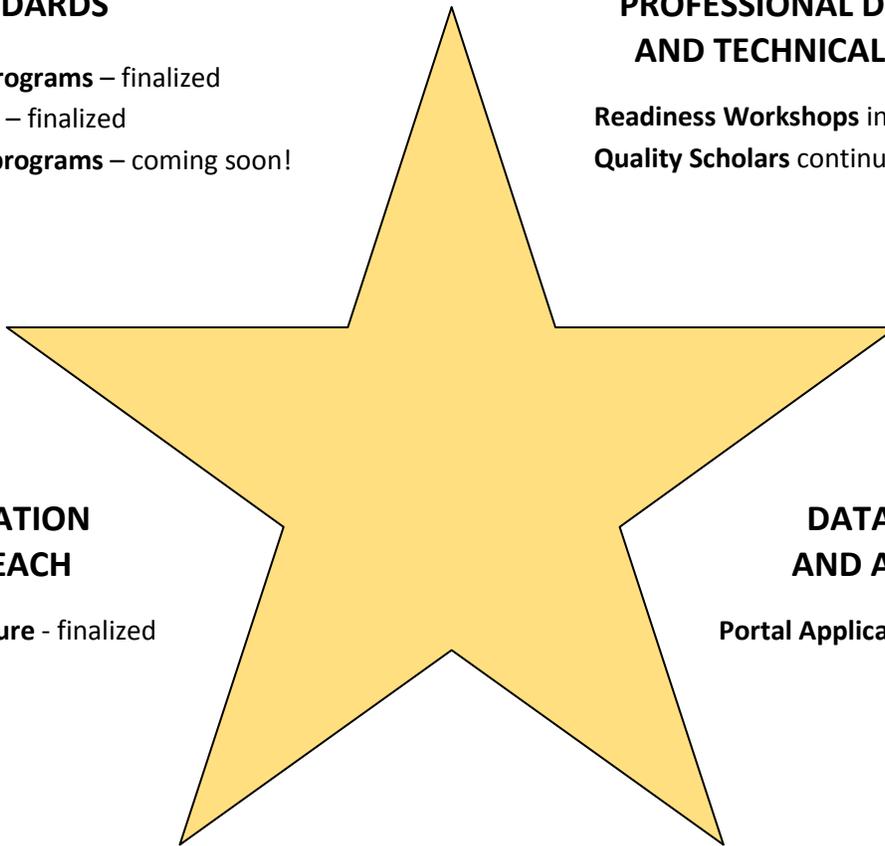


STANDARDS

Center/School-based programs – finalized
Family-based programs – finalized
School-Age Child Care programs – coming soon!

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Readiness Workshops in all 10 regions
Quality Scholars continued for 2012



COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

General purpose brochure - finalized

DATA, MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Portal Application under development

FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

Cost of Quality – Cost estimation model
ready for testing soon

QUALITYstarsNY Readiness Workshops – available in all ten regions of New York State

Introduction to QUALITYstarsNY

Have you heard of QUALITYstarsNY and are wondering what it's all about? Do you want to know more? This workshop will introduce participants to QUALITYstarsNY. Participants will become familiar with the standards and proposed indicators. This exciting initiative will be rolling out across New York State. This 2 hour workshop is an opportunity to be proactive. Prepare now!

Self-Assessment: Preparing for Program Improvement

Are you interested in improving your program's quality? Do you want to gain more confidence in the self-assessment process? This 3 hour workshop will provide practical methods for self-assessment including using ERS and the QUALITYstarsNY standards in assessing your program and developing an improvement plan. Participants at this workshop will receive an Environment Rating Scale book to take and use at their programs.

First Steps for Quality Improvement

Are you familiar with self-assessment and ready to implement a quality improvement plan? This 3 hour workshop will link self-assessment with QUALITYstarsNY standards, connecting across standards in order to leverage quality improvement. You will learn methods of engaging others in a quality improvement effort and make informed choices in planning and implementing improvement activities.



For more information and to register, go to:

www.earlycareandlearning.org