



## Progress in Massachusetts

To improve the coordination and accountability of early education programs and services in Massachusetts, the Early Education for All Campaign (EEA) worked with the Massachusetts Legislature, starting with the FY07 state budget, to earmark \$500,000 for EEC to develop a QRIS for programs participating in the Universal Pre-Kindergarten program. As this process evolved, the QRIS plan was expanded to provide a framework for the governance, monitoring and assessment of the entire early education and care system, encompassing 12,112 programs serving children from birth-school age. In 2008 EEC convened a QRIS working group of diverse leaders from within the early education and care field and, with the help of national experts, drafted Provisional Standards for a statewide QRIS. The final framework adopted by EEC in December of 2010 includes a four-level quality rating system for center-based, family, and out-of-school time care providers, tied to five distinct standard categories.<sup>8</sup> Each of the four quality rating levels builds on the previous level, resulting in a research-based pathway of standards to guide continuous program quality improvement. Such standards should result in more meaningful experiences for children.

### MA QRIS Standard Categories:

1. Curriculum and Learning
2. Safe, Healthy Indoor and Outdoor Environments
3. Workforce and Professional Development
4. Family and Community Engagement
5. Leadership, Management and Administration

## Massachusetts QRIS Pilot

In March 2010, EEC launched the Massachusetts QRIS Pilot as an opportunity for interested programs to engage in the early version of the QRIS and to determine what components are necessary to make it an effective tool for improving program quality. Approximately 640 of the 850 programs participating in the pilot received grants of up to \$10,000 each for the purpose of advancing them at least one level before receiving an official rating.<sup>9</sup> This incentive helped ensure high participation rates in the pilot and helped EEC gain additional insight into the costs and types of support needed for programs to advance to increasingly higher levels of quality.<sup>10</sup> In fall of 2010, the QRIS Provisional Standards were revised based on research, evaluations, and stakeholder feedback. The EEC Board later adopted the proposed revised QRIS Standards for use in the full implementation of QRIS in FY11-FY12.

## Next Steps

The QRIS fully launched in January 2011 under the general supervision of EEC in partnership with contracted organizations. Programs can apply to participate in the QRIS using the online [QRIS Program Manager](#) (QPM) tool. EEC has received 1,045 completed applications, and more than 700 others are still in process. EEC is preparing to award \$2.8 million in QRIS Program Quality Improvement grants of up to \$10,000 apiece to 300-600 programs across the state. Trained field coaches will be available to a select number of programs to help with professional development, curriculum, assessment and/or program management. It is the goal of this initiative, that within two years, participating programs will advance at least one level on the QRIS in order to eventually realize greater outcomes for children.<sup>11</sup> For more information, visit [EEC's QRIS webpage](#).

While much has been accomplished in Massachusetts, much work still remains. A long-term funding strategy must be crafted to fully implement and sustain a statewide QRIS. Furthermore, an effective process for communicating ratings to the public must be designed to identify and monitor program quality for children and families, and to convey program and policy needs to lawmakers. With high-quality early education as a fundamental component of the birth-to-college learning continuum, it is critical that Massachusetts continues to develop a comprehensive approach toward supporting both families and early education programs.

<sup>1</sup> Opinion Dynamics Corporation. (2006). Statewide Parent Survey. Prepared for Strategies For Children.

<sup>2</sup> For example, low-income children who experience high-quality early education and care are 40% less likely to need special education or be held back a grade, 30% more likely to graduate from high school, and more than twice as likely to attend college. High-quality early education yield an estimated 16% return for every dollar invested. See Reynolds, A.J., Temple, J.A., Robertson, D.L., & Mann, E.A. Age 21 Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Title I Chicago Child-Parent Center Program. Institute for Research on Poverty. Discussion Paper no. 1245-02, 2001.; Reynolds, A. J. et al. (2001). Long-term Effects of an Early Childhood Intervention on Educational Achievement and Juvenile Arrest. *JAMA*, 285(18), 2339-2346.; Barnett, W. S. & Masse, L. N. (2007). Comparative benefit-cost analysis of the Abecedarian program and its policy implications. *Economics of Education Review*, 26, 113-125.; Rolnick, A. and Grunewald, R. (2003). Early childhood development: Economic development with a high return. Retrieved from [http://www.minneapolisfed.org/publications\\_papers\\_studies/earlychild/abc-part2.pdf](http://www.minneapolisfed.org/publications_papers_studies/earlychild/abc-part2.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> National Association for the Education of Young Children; Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care; February 2009 data.

<sup>4</sup> NCCIC, October 2010. Available at [http://nccic.aef.hhs.gov/poptopics/quickfact\\_QRIS.html](http://nccic.aef.hhs.gov/poptopics/quickfact_QRIS.html)

<sup>5</sup> Barnard, W., Etheridge Smith, W., Fiene, R., & Swanson, K. (2006). Evaluation of Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS Quality Rating System in Child Care Settings; Norris, D., & Dunn, L. (2004). Reaching for the Stars: Family Child Care Home Validation Study Final Report; Elicker, J., Clawson Langill, C., Ruprecht, K., & Kwon, K. (2007). Paths to Quality: Child Care Quality Rating System for Indiana – What is the Scientific Basis? Child Development & Family Studies, Purdue University; Grisham-Brown, J., Gravit, M., Gao, X., & Missal, K. (2008). KIDS NOW Evaluation. University of Kentucky; Bryant, D., Bernier, K., Maxwell, K., & Peisner-Feinberg, E. (2000). Validating North Carolina's 5-Star Child Care Licensing System. Retrieved from <http://nccic.aef.hhs.gov/poptopics/qrs-impactqualitycc.html> and [http://www.fpc.unc.edu/smartstart/Reports/Validating\\_Licensing\\_System\\_Brochure.pdf](http://www.fpc.unc.edu/smartstart/Reports/Validating_Licensing_System_Brochure.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid; University of Tennessee College of Social Work, Office of Research and Public Service. (2004). Who Care's For Tennessee's Children?: A review of Tennessee's child care evaluation report card program. Mathematica Policy Research. The Seeds to Success Modified Field Test: Findings from the Impact and Implementation Studies. (2010). Available at: [http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/EarlyChildhood/seeds\\_to\\_success\\_mft.pdf](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/EarlyChildhood/seeds_to_success_mft.pdf). "Missouri Quality Rating System" policy brief. Available at [http://mucenter.missouri.edu/ORS\\_geninfo\\_9.pdf](http://mucenter.missouri.edu/ORS_geninfo_9.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Oklahoma Child Care Resource and Referral Association, Inc. (OKCCRRRA). (2005). Oklahoma Child Care and Early Education Portfolio 2005.

<sup>8</sup> As of this writing, EEC has defined the first four levels of its QRIS. Final definitions for level five are yet to be determined.

<sup>9</sup> Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. Board Meeting PowerPoint Presentation. December 2010. [http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/board\\_materials/20101214\\_qris.pptx](http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/board_materials/20101214_qris.pptx)

<sup>10</sup> Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. "Building a System of Early Education and Care." July 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. [Updated April 2011]