



Massachusetts' Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

*Overview of standards and initial
pilot design*



**MASSACHUSETTS
Department of
Early Education and Care**

Purposes of Massachusetts' QRIS

- Parents have easily accessible information about the quality of early care and education programs.
- Programs and providers use one streamlined set of standards that are connected to supports and fiscal incentives to help them meet and maintain the standards.
- Programs receive feedback and are involved in continuous quality improvement.
- Policymakers understand where and how to invest additional resources.



Process for developing QRIS Standards

- Guidance from EEC Board and EEC Advisory Team (*Feb. - March 2008*)
- Group of internal and external stakeholders created a draft (*Feb. - Nov. 2008*)
- Presentation to Board about QRIS Standards (*Jan. 2009*)
- Draft posted for public input (*Mar - June 2009*)
 - Heard that the Standards were complicated
 - Concerns about whether truly evidence-based
- Standards were reviewed and revised in order to ensure that they are clear, evidence-based and measurable (*Nov 2009 - Jan 2010*)



MA QRIS Standards

- Standards Categories:
 - Curriculum and Learning
 - Environment
 - Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development
 - Family Involvement
 - Leadership, Management and Administration
- Customized for:
 - Center and School Based
 - Family Child Care
 - After-School and Out of School Time



QRIS Standards - Categories

- Topics covered within each category:
 - *Curriculum and Learning*: curriculum, assessment, teacher child relationships and interactions, special education, children with diverse language and cultures
 - *Environment*: indoor, outdoor, health and safety
 - *Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development*: directors, teachers, teacher assistants, consultants
 - *Family Involvement*
 - *Leadership, Management and Administration*: administration, management and leadership, supervision, evaluation, community involvement



QRIS Standards – Block System

Massachusetts Standards are now a Building Blocks System – Must do everything at Level 1 before progressing to Level 2, etc.

Is this common nationally?*

- **Building blocks** - All standards in a level must be met to move to the next level: **13 states** - DC, DE, IN, KY, MD, ME, MT, NH, NM, OH, OK, PA, TN
- **Points systems** - Standards are assigned a point value, which are calculated to determine ratings: **3 states** - CO, NC, VT
- **Combination** - A combination of building blocks and points used to determine ratings: **2 states** - IA, LA



Example: Center-Based: Curriculum and Learning - Curriculum

Level	Standard	Measurement
Level 1	Meets Licensing regulations	<i>License in good standing</i>
Level 2	<p>Meets Requirements of Level 1 PLUS</p> <p>Program uses a written comprehensive curriculum that reflects diversity in its approach, is developmentally appropriate for the children served, and is aligned with the MA Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences</p> <p>Schedule includes specific time each day for reading to children either individually or in small groups</p> <p>Materials are sufficient, in good condition, reflect the language and culture of the children in the classroom and are appropriate to the age of the children in the class</p>	<p><i>Curriculum from an approved list or submission of the curriculum for review</i></p> <p><i>Daily schedule includes a time allotment of at least 15 minutes for reading to children</i></p> <p><i>Teacher uses Materials Checklist in Early Childhood Program Standards for 3 and 4 year olds.</i></p> <p><i>Use of the ITERS (if appropriate) and ECERS</i></p>
Level 3	<p>Meets Requirements of Level 2 PLUS</p> <p>Staff has received formal training in the curriculum and uses the MA Guidelines for Preschool Learning Standards to guide their planning of the written weekly lesson plans</p> <p>Daily schedule includes individual, small group, child initiated and teacher directed activities</p>	<p><i>Documentation of the staff training in the MA Guidelines for Preschool Learning</i></p> <p><i>Documentation of the staff training in the curriculum and a review of the lesson plans</i></p> <p><i>An outside reliable rater administers the ITERS (if appropriate) and the ECERS with a total score of 4.0 or better with a sub-score of at least 3.0 in all areas</i></p>
Level 4	<p>Meets Requirements of Level 3 PLUS</p> <p>Alignment of the Curriculum with the MA Guidelines for Preschool Learning Standards is documented in the daily/weekly lesson plans</p> <p>Staff receive ongoing training and supervision with feedback to ensure fidelity to the curriculum model</p> <p>Program supports reflective teaching practices for staff through the use of peer groups, coaches and /or mentors.</p> <p>Schedule includes built-in staff planning time</p>	<p><i>Documentation of the training (Registry), review and documentation of the process for supervision, feedback and reflective practices.</i></p> <p><i>Review of lesson plans and documentation of reflective teaching practices such as videos, journals, meeting notes or portfolios</i></p> <p><i>An outside reliable rater administers either: ITERS (if appropriate) and ECERS with a total score of 5.0 or better with a sub-score of at least 5.0 in all areas</i></p> <p>OR</p> <p><i>CLASS with a total score in the high range</i></p>
Level 4 +	<p>Meets Requirements of Level 4 PLUS</p> <p>Accredited by a national organization</p>	<i>Current accreditation certificate</i>
Level 5	TBD	TBD

Highlights: Measurement

- Documentation of meeting the standards will be done through having a license in good standing, document submission, use of the following tools, verification in the workforce registry, and onsite monitoring using the ERS tools (ECERS, ITERS, FCCERS, and SACCRS)
- Many of these tools are available free of charge and EEC will work to make them available on its website
 - Curriculum: Materials Checklist in the Early Childhood Program Standards or NAFCC (Level 2); Optional: CLASS (Center/School, Level 4)
 - Teacher Child Relationships: Self-assessment tool to monitor classroom climate such as Arnett (Level 2); Arnett Scale completed by outside reviewer (Level 4)
 - Children with Diverse Languages: Self-assessment using the ECERS or ELLCO (Center/School, Level 3); Use of the Pre-Las or other valid instruments to determine child's primary language (Level 4)
 - Outdoor: Use of a certified playground inspector (Center/School, Level 3)
 - Health and Safety: Use of the California Health Scale as a self-assessment (Center/School, Level 3)
 - Family Involvement: Strengthening Families self-assessment tool (Level 2)
 - Leadership, Management and Administration: Optional: Program Administration Scale by outside validator or NAEYC validation visit



Highlights: ERS tools

- Many states have a strong role for the ERS tools in their QRIS standards – 14 of 18 states include. Variations in way included*:
 - ERS Scores are used to determine rating levels: 7 states
 - Program can earn rating points for ERS scores: 4 states
 - Program must be assessed with ERS, but does not tie particular scores to ratings: 2 states
 - Self-assessment tool: 1 state
- MA Standards have a strong role for the ERS tools
 - Level 2 – use the tools for self assessment
 - Level 3 – score of 4.0 or higher, with no sub-score below 3.0, by outside reliable administrator
 - Level 4 – score of 5.0 or higher in all areas by outside reliable administrator



Highlights:

- **National accreditation** is included in the MA Standards as a Level 4 +. Because of block system will still need to document evidence of meeting earlier criteria
- Provides a pathway describing the **workforce qualifications** for Directors, Teachers, Family Child Care Providers, Assistants, and Consultants
- **License-Exempt Programs** (public school preschools, some Montessori and/or religious elementary schools) will use the Center and School-Based standards. They will have to demonstrate they can meet licensing standards at Level 1.
- National **Strengthening Families** framework included under training topics required of educators, and the use of the program self-assessment



Questions and Responses:

Since the standards were posted in late December EEC has received additional feedback:

- Concern: Duplication of efforts for Head Start programs and programs pursuing NAEYC because of the structure of the building blocks. Programs would need to submit material to up to three systems.

Response: Common materials could be used to submit to each system.

- Concern: Some of the standards at each level seem impossible.

Response: These standards set forth what we believe is right for children and youth. Together need to figure out supports to help programs achieve these standards.

- Concern: If programs perceive they won't get far up the levels, why would they participate?

Response: Over time the state will increasingly focus its resources on programs who can demonstrate quality. QRIS will be used as a way to identify these programs. EEC recognizes, based on other other states' experiences, that there will be a start-up period as programs get involved in the QRIS and the supports to programs evolve.



Massachusetts' QRIS Pilot



QRIS Pilot – Spring 2010

- Invite a selected group of programs to participate in the pilot
 - *Being debated about who the group will be*
- Through the pilot EEC will test out the rating system and the monitoring tools
- EEC will work to develop fiscal incentives from ARRA and other sources for FY2011 to encourage programs to move up to the next level
- Will continuously reflect on pilot, seeking ways to improve in preparation for full implementation
- Family and Consumer Engagement campaign will be part of full implementation, may seek initial feedback from parents during pilot about messaging



QRIS Pilot - Timeline

- February – May 2010
 - Train reviewers to reliability on ERS tools
 - Invite selected programs to submit documentation for rating
- June 2010
 - EEC staff review documentation and determine eligibility for ratings
- July – September 2010
 - Do onsite reviews, primarily for ERS ratings
- Concurrently
 - Rebidding Professional Development
 - Determine other sources to support program quality



Public Comment about the Pilot:

Since posting the QRIS Standards and talking about the potential QRIS Pilot, EEC has received public feedback:

- Feedback – An original guiding principle was not to do this until we had money for new fiscal incentives and a program and practitioner supports. There do not appear to be any new fiscal incentives or sufficient program supports, why are you doing this now?
 - Related feedback - Understanding that QRIS is a necessary system component to be eligible for the Early Learning Challenge Grant and we don't want to jeopardize our chances for that

Response: In order to be competitive for the Early Learning Challenge Grant, Massachusetts must move ahead with a QRIS.

- How will we have the resources to take this to scale? We want to make sure that what we're piloting is what we want to take to scale.

Response: Through the pilot we will learn a lot about the resources needed to take this scale, in terms of:

- supports needed for programs to meet the standards,
- resources to award an accurate rating,
- fiscal incentives to participate in the QRIS.



QRIS Next Steps:

- Work with original external stakeholders group and EEC Advisory Team over next month to review Standards and refine plan for QRIS pilot
 - Standards and permission to pilot QRIS are scheduled to be voted on at the February EEC Board meeting
- Pilot the QRIS this spring
 - Pilot rating and monitoring process
 - Ensure connection between PD procurement and QRIS
 - Complete workforce registry
- There will be an opportunity after the pilot to step back and consider any necessary changes to the Standards or Rating process, and continue developing the QRIS through a continuous improvement process

