

A New Perspective from the Provider Community

Eric J. Karolak, Ph.D.
Early Care and Education Consortium
Washington, DC

South Carolina Early Childhood
Quality Standards Task Force
Columbia, SC
October 18, 2006

Introduction

- The Early Care and Education Consortium (ECEC)
- Contextual Factors Affecting ECE Quality
- Program Factors Affecting Quality
- How Best to Approach Standards?

Early Care and Education Consortium

- Formed in 1999, reorganized 2006
- Alliance of the largest national and regional ECE to influence public policy on behalf of quality care and education for children and families
 - ◆ 8,000 centers
 - ◆ 800,000 children
 - ◆ Nearly every state

Supporting Critical Investments in ECE

- *Ready for School* – All children birth through age five should have access to quality early education
- *Ready for Life* – All early care and education policy and programs should recognize that school readiness is only one aspect of optimum child development

Supporting Critical Investments in ECE

- *Ready for Work* – All families should have access to affordable quality child care
- *Ready for Life* – All ECE policies and programs should recognize that school readiness is only one aspect of optimum child development

Public Policy Premises

- Recognize the interdependence of the ECE infrastructure, including the wide variety of programs supporting young children and families
- Complement and sustain existing programs offering quality services that both support working families and prepares children for school.

Public Policy Premises

- Increase commitment to recruiting, training, and supporting early care and education professionals in order to establish and sustain high quality
- Reflect a commitment to a beneficial childhood for all children

Contextual Factors Affecting ECE Quality

- Interplay between state licensing regulations and market dynamics
- Growth of standards-based programs and cross-program alignment
- Increasing resources

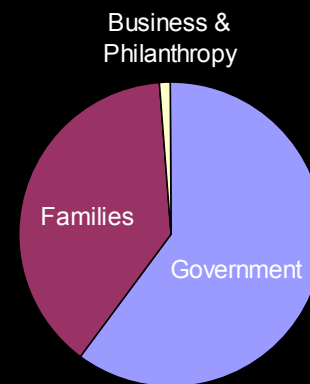
Contextual Factors: Licensing Regulations

- Licensing regulations set the foundation for quality

“States in this study with more demanding licensing standards have fewer poor-quality centers; centers that comply with additional standards beyond those required for basic licensing (such as those for funding or accreditation) provide higher quality services.”
(Cost, Quality & Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995)

Contextual Factors: The Market

- “How much quality” is a function of what consumers can afford and choose to consume
 - ◆ Families directly account for 60% of child care expenditures



Contextual Factors: Increasing Resources

- New funding supports enhanced quality
 - ◆ Welfare Reform
 - ★ State & Federal child care spending doubled, FY96-00
 - ★ Quality initiatives = 8% of CCDF
 - ◆ Prekindergarten
 - ★ 40 states spent \$2.5B on preK in 2003

Program Factors Affecting Quality

- Classroom structure
- Staff qualifications and characteristics
- Program dynamics

Program Factors: Classroom Structure

- Includes variables focused on classroom composition
 - ◆ Group size
 - ◆ Staff-child ratio

Program Factors: Staff Characteristics

- Teacher Variables
 - ◆ Formal education
 - ◆ Specific training
 - ◆ Experience
- Administrator's experience
- Staff compensation and turnover

Program Factors: Program Dynamics

- Curriculum integrated across developmental areas
 - ◆ Cognitive
 - ◆ Physical
 - ◆ Social/emotional
 - ◆ Language
 - ◆ Approaches to learning

Program Factors: Program Dynamics

- Nature of the learning environment
 - ◆ Teacher-child interactions
 - ◆ Positive teacher behaviors
 - ◆ Small-group activities
 - ◆ Implementation of the curriculum
- Parent engagement
 - ◆ Especially reading and talking with children

How Best to Approach Program Standards?

- Three-part Test
- Research – Policy – Practice Lifecycle

The Three-part Test

- Is the standard evidence-based?
 - ◆ Is the research conclusive?
 - ◆ Are there policy considerations that recommend the standard?
 - ◆ What is the likelihood the standard will support program accountability?

The Three-part Test

- Is the standard realistic?
 - ◆ Is infrastructure in place to achieve the standard?
 - ◆ Is sufficient time provided to achieve the standard?

The Three-part Test

- Will the standard be fully funded?
 - ◆ Is there a phased approach to implementation?
 - ◆ If not fully-funded, who will bear the added cost?

Research – Policy – Practice Lifecycle

- Evaluation of standard in practice
- Revision, modification, and/or support and technical assistance

Thank you!

- Early Care and Education Consortium
 - ◆ 202-312-7427
 - ◆ www.ececonsortium.org
 - ◆ Look for us at the NAEYC Annual Conference – Atlanta, Nov. 8-10