

S.C. Early Childhood Quality Standards Focus Group Findings

Candid Views of Key Stakeholders

October 2006

Methodology

- ❑ Objective: Obtain specific views on quality standards from key stakeholders.
 - ❑ Design: Formal discussion guide used
Individuals assured of confidentiality
 - ❑ Groups: DSS, DOL, First Steps, Higher Ed, Providers (3 groups), Advocates
 - ❑ Process: Facilitated, structured discussion
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Caveats

- ❑ This is qualitative research.
 - ❑ It may or may not be representative of the views of all stakeholders of each specific group.
 - ❑ It does provide a “finger on the pulse” of the leadership of these key constituencies, all of whom are intensely involved in and passionate about early childhood issues and opportunities.
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Discussion Guide Background

- Identifiable key elements of high-quality ECE *common to different program designs:*
 - **Structure:** group size, ratio of staff to children in group
 - **Staff qualifications and characteristics:** teacher's formal education, training & experience; the administrator's experience; level of compensation and turnover
 - **Program dynamics:** curriculum, natures of the learning environment (teacher-child interactions) and engagement of parents.
 - **"Smarter Reform: Moving Beyond Single-Program Solutions to an Early Care and Education System,"** Louise Stoney, Anne Mitchell, and Mildred Warner, *Journal of the Community Development Society*, Vol. 37, No. 2, Summer 2006
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Discussion Guide

- **What is working well/NOT well in early childhood?**
 - **Specific Views:**
 - Group size
 - Ratios
 - Curricula
 - Educational Requirements for Teachers
 - Value of Experience for Teachers
 - How should programs be evaluated
 - How to communicate standards
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What is working well?

- Growing public awareness/support
 - T.E.A.C.H. and Training
 - # completing ECD 101
 - Training Registry
 - Career Ladder
 - Articulation of courses that count toward B.A.
 - DSS: improved processes, support
 - First Steps grants, training & local support
 - Competition
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What is NOT working well?

- ❑ High cost of quality (education, codes, ratios, etc)
 - ❑ Lack of incentives/rewards for higher quality
 - ❑ Lack of collaboration at state level
 - ❑ Low teacher wages resulting in high turnover
 - ❑ Lack of access of poorest to quality care
 - ❑ Lack of agreed-upon definition of quality
 - ❑ Lack of quality rating system
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S.C. Regulations on Ratios*

	ABC Level 1	ABC Enhanced**
Infants: 0 – 12 mos	1:6	1:5
Toddlers: 13 - 24mos	1:6	1:5
Toddlers: 25 – 36 mos	1:10	1:7
Pre-schoolers: 36 – 48 mos	1:13	1:11
Pre-schoolers: 4 Yr Olds	1:18	1:13

*Will change in 2007, 2008, 2009

**May or may not meet ratios, depending on scores in other areas.

Views on Staff Ratios

□ Views of Early Childhood Experts and Advocates

	First Steps	D.O.E.	DSS	Higher Ed	Advocates
Infants 0 – 12 mos	1:3	1:4	1:4	1:3, 4	1:3
Toddlers 13 - 24mos	1:5	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4
Toddler 25 – 36 mos	1:6	1:5	1:5	1:4,5	1:6
Pre-Schooler 36 – 48 mos	1:8	1:8	1:8	1:6	1:7
Pre-Schoolers 4 Yr Olds	1:9	1:10	1:10	1:8	1:10

Views on Staff Ratios

□ Views of Providers.

	Non-Profit; Head Start	For-Profit; Faith-Based* (L)	Faith Based**(R)
Infants 0 – 12 mos	1:4	1:3, 4	Eliminate all requirements on ratios – <i>let free market determine</i>
Toddlers 13 - 24mos	1:5	1:5, 6	
Toddler 25 – 36 mos	1:6	1:7	
Pre-schooler 36 – 48 mos	1:7	1:9	
Pre-Schooler 4 Yr Olds	1:8	1:11	

*Faith-based participants were licensed. **Registered faith-based participants

S.C. Regulations on Group Size

- No requirements for group size
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Views on Group Size

□ Views of Early Childhood Experts and Advocates

	First Steps	D.O.E.	DSS	Higher Ed	Advocates
Infants 0 – 12 mos	6	8	8	6 - 8	6
Toddlers 13 - 24mos	10	8	8	8	8
Toddler 25 – 36 mos	12	10	10	8 - 10	12
Pre-Schooler 36 – 48 mos	16	16	16	12	14
Pre-Schoolers 4 Yr Olds	18	20	20	16	20

Views on Group Size

□ Views of Providers.

	Non-Profit; Head Start	For-Profit; Faith-Based (L)	Faith Based (R)
Infants 0 – 12 mos	8	6	Eliminate all requirements on group size <i>base on size of room + free market</i>
Toddlers 13 - 24mos	10	10 - 12	
Toddler 25 – 36 mos	12	14	
Pre-schooler 36 – 48 mos	14	18	
Pre-Schooler 4 Yr Olds	18	22	

Require a curriculum?

□ General Themes

- Yes. Require a formal curriculum
 - Provide choice to allow fit with mission
 - Must be research-based
 - Must be developmentally appropriate
 - Align learning standards with public schools
 - Provide FREE training and T.A.
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Require a curriculum?

□ Views of Early Childhood Experts and Advocates

First Steps	D.O.E.	DSS	Higher Ed	Advocates
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Choice Nationally-Recognized Research-Based Developmentally Appropriate Provide + On-going T.A.	Choice Research-Based Aligned with Good Start – Grow Smart Early Learning Standards (DAP)	Choice Essential! Developmentally Appropriate Research-Based Best-Practice Based	Choice Identify Criteria Developmentally Appropriate Research-Based Provide Training!	Choice Research-Based Developmentally Appropriate Aligns 5-K Learning Standards

Require a curriculum?

□ Views of Providers.

Non-Profit, Head Start	For-Profit; Faith-Based (L)	Faith Based (R)
Yes	Yes	No
Choice (to fit mission) Research-Based Developmentally Appropriate Ensure Curriculum Implemented FREE Training on Curriculum Chosen	Choice Research-Based Developmentally Appropriate On track with school district free training on whatever curriculum center selects	Allow decision to be market-driven

Views on Education Requirements

□ General Themes:

- Work toward higher minimum education expectations in all centers
 - Provide incentives and support to get there
 - Differentiate education requirements between infants, toddlers and pre-school
 - Consider ECD 101 as pre-service requirement
 - For publicly-funded 4K, match public school 4K education requirements
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Views on Education Requirements

First Steps	D.O.E.	D.S.S.	Higher Ed	Advocates
<p>Director AA in ECE or related field</p> <p>Teacher Working toward AA in ECE</p> <p>Asst. Teacher Working toward certificate</p> <p>Floater Completion of ECD 101.</p>	<p>Director BA in ECE Or related field</p> <p>Teacher 3-4 yr olds: BA ECE 0-3: AA ECE</p> <p>Asst. Teachers 4 yr olds: AA 0-3: EC Credential</p> <p><i>Have a timeframe + support to reach higher education levels.</i></p>	<p>Director BA in ECE + Admin credential + <i>incentives to get there</i></p> <p>Teachers Is, Ts: AA in ECE 3-4 yr olds: BA</p> <p>Asst. Teacher ECD 101 + Working toward AA</p>	<p>Director BA in ECE</p> <p>Lead Teacher AA in ECE</p> <p>Lead Teacher <i>(public funded 4K)</i> BA + certification</p> <p>Lead Teacher I/T credential for infant/toddler teachers</p> <p>Entry Level Pre-Service ECD 101 requirement</p>	<p>Director AA in ECE + Admin courses + working on BS</p> <p>Teacher BA: 3, 4 yr olds AA: for <3</p> <p>Asst. Teacher AA (50% of) Completion of ECD 101 + Working toward AA (50%)</p> <p>Floater Completion of ECD 101.</p>

Views on Education Requirements

Non-Profit, Head Start	For-Profit; Faith-Based (L)	Faith Based (R)
<p>Director BA in ECE <i>Or related field</i></p> <p>Lead Teacher 3-4 yr olds: BA, ECE 0-3 yr olds: AA. ECE + Working toward BA</p> <p>Asst. Teacher 0-3 yr olds: Complete ECD 101 within 6 mos. 3-4 yr olds: AA ECE or working toward AA</p>	<p>Facility Mix: BA, AA, ECD 100 + H.S.</p> <p>Director Combo Ed + Exp AA in ECE/R.E.</p> <p>Lead Teacher Working toward AA</p> <p>Asst. Teacher ECD 101 Working CDA certificate</p> <p>Floater Completion of ECD 101. <i>Min. 1 BA ECE in facility.</i></p>	<p>Eliminate educational requirements</p> <p><i>Some people with 8th grade education are better educated than others with H.S. Diplomas</i></p>

Views on Value of Experience

□ General Views

- Every group felt that the value of experience was highly subjective
 - Every group felt that the value of experience was dependent upon the quality of the setting where the experience took place
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Views on Evaluation

□ General Views

- Most groups feel ITERS, ECERS, FDCERS is most appropriate, cost-efficient
 - Evaluate every 2-3 years based on performance
 - Evaluators must be trained to reliability
 - Provide training + T.A. in evaluation tool
 - Minority view: provide choice of evaluation approaches + training & T.A.
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Environmental Rating Scales

- Overview of the Harms, Clifford and Cryer Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales
 - Four environment rating scales, each designed for a different segment. (ITERS, ECERS, FDCERS)
 - Scales evaluate: *Physical Environment; Basic Care; Curriculum; Interaction; Schedule and Program Structure; and Parent and Staff Education.*
 - The scales have proven reliability and validity.
 - Website: <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecers/>
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Environmental Rating Scales

- Scales designed to assess process quality.
 - Process quality consists of the various **interactions** that go on in a classroom **between staff and children**, staff and parents, and among the children themselves, and **interactions children have with the many materials and activities** in the environment, as well as those features, such as space, schedule & materials that support interactions.
 - Process quality is **assessed primarily through observation** and has been found to be **more predictive of child outcomes than structural indicators**.
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How to evaluate programs?

First Steps	D.O.E.	D.S.S.	Higher Ed	Advocates
<p>Use Research-Based Rating System</p> <p>ITERS ECERS FDCERS</p>	<p>ECERS ITERS FDERS</p> <p>Use S.C. State Team already trained to inter-rater reliability</p>	<p>ITERS ECERS</p> <p>Provide technical assistance in areas that score low</p>	<p>ITERS ECERS</p> <p>Evaluators trained to reliability</p> <p><i>Every 2- 3 yrs Depending on performance</i></p> <p>Other: Use NAEYC model on a regular cycle</p>	<p>Independent Assessment such as</p> <p>ITERS ECERS</p> <p>Core group of reliable assessors</p> <p>1-3 years</p>

How to evaluate programs?

Non-Profit, Head Start	For-Profit; Faith-Based (L)	Faith Based (R)
<p>Staff conducts internal assessment</p> <p>Followed by external Evaluation</p> <p>ITERS ECERS + Program Administration Scale (PAS)</p>	<p>Voluntary</p> <p>Provide Choice: Must be Developmentally Appropriate + Trained Evaluators</p> <p>Tie results to funding</p> <p>Provide training on ITERS, ECERS Or other Choice</p>	<p>Choice of Appropriate Peer Group</p>

Communicating Achievement

General Views

- VOLUNTARY quality rating system
- EASY for all parents to understand
- Build upon the current ABC system
 - Existing trust of ABC system among providers
 - Cost-effective add level

Minority View

- Rely on free market system
 - Should be up to individual center
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