

QUALITYstarsNY:

Getting New York State's Children Ready for Kindergarten and College

QUALITYstarsNY (QSNY) is a voluntary five-star "rating system" much like those used for hotels and restaurants, with the number of stars indicating the quality of an early care and learning program. The stars are awarded according to research-based, uniform standards. The ultimate goal is to increase the number of high-quality programs in New York State to better prepare children for success in school and beyond.

About 75% of brain growth and 85% of intellect, personality and social skills develop before age five, and high-quality early learning programs can boost children's skills. Research shows children with access to high-quality early learning have twice the vocabulary, better social skills, and are better able to follow directions – key skills for success in school. They are twice as likely to attend college. A host of well-established, nonpartisan groups, including the Rand Corporation, Federal Reserve economists and Nobel Laureate James Heckman support investment in high-quality early care and learning. Cost benefit analyses indicate a return on investment of as much as \$7 for every \$1.

Twenty-four other states already have such systems in place. The initiatives look at how an individual program measures up in terms of standards, using research-based tools to assess overall quality. That includes a look at interactions between the teachers and children, professional development for staff, parent engagement and on-going efforts to keep up with best practices to support children's learning and development. QSNY also creates supports for programs wishing to improve and move to a higher star rating.

The potential benefits of QSNY are enormous. The rating system offers a clear, organized, cost-effective way to assess, improve and communicate the quality of New York State's early care and learning programs. QSNY will benefit:

- **CHILDREN:** by creating stronger learning environments, rooted in proven research and techniques
- **PARENTS:** by helping them become more savvy consumers in choosing high-quality early care and learning programs
- **EARLY CARE AND LEARNING FIELD:** by offering a roadmap and support to improve the quality of services
- **POLICYMAKERS:** by instituting proven, research-based uniform tools to guide more efficient and effective use of resources to support early care and learning services
- **TAXPAYERS and DONORS:** by establishing accountability and a cost-effective system that maximizes the state's limited education funding

Who is in charge of QSNY?

QSNY began as a collaboration of early childhood experts and advocates, drawing on the experience of other states as well as national consultants. The New York State Office of Children and Families and the New York State Education Department are actively involved in the design and implementation. QSNY is now overseen by the state's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), a gubernatorial advisory body comprised of early childhood professionals from the state, public and private sectors, charged with building a stronger early care and learning system for New York State's children.

Last year, the state conducted a Field Test in more than 200 early care and learning settings in 13 communities across the state, including: 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 QSNY funded?

The initial planning and development for QSNY was supported with funding from federal grants and private foundations. These investments supported development and design, as well as the field test. Some funding is available through the ECAC to continue to design the plan for full implementation.

What is the next step in moving toward full implementation?

At this time, the future of QSNY is in the hands of state policymakers. The *Winning Beginning NY* coalition and its partner, the Public Policy and Education Fund, are calling upon stakeholders to urge state officials to take the next steps in implementing QSNY for New York State's children and families.

Where can I learn more or get involved?

Watch, download and share our new video about QSNY, which includes interviews with a parent, child care director and business leader. It is available at: www.winningbeginningny.org. To read more about QSNY, visit: www.winningbeginningny.org/QUALITYSTARSNY. There, you can sign a petition to policymakers and find other ways to help with our campaign to advance this critical new initiative!