Measuring Quality of Early Learning: Overview and Introduction to Issues

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Purposes of Measuring Quality of Early Learning

- To **describe** children’s experiences in early learning environments
- To **identify** experiences in early learning programs that are positively associated with children’s development
- To **improve** the quality of early learning programs
- To **rate** the quality of early learning programs
- To **make decisions** about renewing program funding
3 Issues in Measuring Quality of Early Learning

1. Definitional
   - How do we define “quality of early learning”?

2. Measurement
   - How well do our measures assess “quality of early learning”?

3. Use
   - Are decisions we make and actions we take based upon our measures justified and fair?
Defining Quality of Early Learning

Quality of Early Learning

Settings? Dimensions?

Ages?
## Structural Quality in Early Learning Programs

### QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY</th>
<th>STATE PRE-K REQUIREMENT</th>
<th>BENCHMARK</th>
<th>DOES REQUIREMENT MEET BENCHMARK?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early learning standards</td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher degree</td>
<td>BA (public); AA (nonpublic)</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher specialized training</td>
<td>AA in ECE</td>
<td>Specializing in pre-K</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant teacher degree</td>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>CDA or equivalent</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher in-service</td>
<td>15 clock hours/year</td>
<td>At least 15 hours/year</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum class size 3-year-olds</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20 or lower</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum class size 4-year-olds</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff-child ratio 3-year-olds</td>
<td>1:10 or better</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff-child ratio 4-year-olds</td>
<td>2:17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff-child ratio</td>
<td>1:10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screening/referral immunizations</td>
<td>Vision; hearing; height/weight; blood pressure;</td>
<td>Vision, hearing, health; and at least 1 support service</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and support services dental; developmental; full physical exam;</td>
<td></td>
<td>and support services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals</td>
<td>Depends on length of program day³</td>
<td>At least 1/day</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>Site visits and other monitoring</td>
<td>Site visits</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Process Quality in Early Learning Programs

**DOMAINS**

- Emotional Support
  - Positive climate
  - Negative climate
  - Sensitivity
  - Respect for student perspective
  - Relationships, Affect, Respect, Communication
  - Punitive, Sarcasm/disrespect, Negativity
  - Aware, Responsive, Address problem, Comfort
  - Flexibility, Autonomy, Student expression

- Classroom Organization
  - Behavior management
  - Productivity
  - Instructional learning formats
  - Clear expectation, Proactive, Redirection
  - Maximize time, Efficient routines and transitions
  - Variety, Promote student interest, Clarity, Engaging

- Instructional Support
  - Concept development
  - Quality of feedback
  - Language modeling
  - Analysis/reasoning, Creativity, Integration
  - Feedback loops, Encourage responses, Expand performance
  - Conversation, Open-ended, Repeat/extend, Advanced language
This study examined development of academic, language, and social skills among 4-year-olds in publicly supported prekindergarten (pre-K) programs in relation to 3 methods of measuring pre-K quality, which are as follows: (a) adherence to 9 standards of quality related to program infrastructure and design, (b) observations of the overall quality of classroom environments, and (c) observations of teachers’ emotional and instructional interactions with children in classrooms. Participants were 2,439 children enrolled in 671 pre-K classrooms in 11 states. Adjusting for prior skill levels, child and family characteristics, program characteristics, and state, teachers’ instructional interactions predicted academic and language skills and teachers’ emotional interactions predicted teacher-reported social skills. Findings suggest that policies, program development, and professional development efforts that improve teacher–child interactions can facilitate children’s school readiness.
Measuring Quality of Early Learning
Measuring Quality of Early Learning

Quality of Early Learning

X1  X2  X3  X4
1. State assumptions about measures of quality. For example,
   a. The content of the measures assess **relevant** aspects of quality of early learning
   b. The content of the measures **represents** all aspects of quality of early learning
   c. The scores from the measures are **positively associated** with children’s outcomes
   d. The items comport with expectations about how they should be measuring the **quality of early learning**
   e. The scores are **stable** (e.g., across time, raters/observers)

2. Compile evidence to evaluate the plausibility of each assumption

Using Measures of Quality of Early Learning
Using Measures of Quality of Early Learning

Quality of Early Learning

Uses in Education

X1  X2  X3  X4
Using Measures of Quality of Early Learning

• After defining quality of early learning, and evaluating how well our measures assess quality, we can make assertions as to whether... the decisions we make and actions we take based upon the measures are justified and fair.

• The higher the stakes we attach to our measures, the stronger the evidence we need that our measures are assessing quality of early learning.

• For each of the next presentations, consider these 3 issues...
  ○ How is “quality of early learning” defined?
  ○ How well do the measures assess “quality of early learning”?
  ○ Are decisions made or actions taken based upon the measures justified and fair?