First 5 Alameda County QRIS Evaluation

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Contents

Introduction and Background

In 2012, the California Department of Education's Child Development Division received a Federal Race-to-the-Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT) to take a comprehensive and systemic approach to improving and rating the quality of child care, especially for children with high needs. Alameda County was one of 16 California counties engaged in the design and implementation of this Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). As part of its Quality Child Care Strategy, First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) is leading this effort through grants to early care and education sites for classroom improvements, technical assistance, coaching and consultation. Additionally, they are forging and coordinating community partnerships to leverage the effective use of limited resources and to build the foundation for sustainable best practices.

First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) partnered with Harder+Company Community Research (Harder+Company), an independent consulting firm, to conduct a local evaluation of their QRIS to gain a better understanding of its implementation from the perspective of providers and stakeholders, as well as through a review of the QRIS data. Through this evaluation F5AC seeks to address the following questions:

- What motivates providers to participate in QRIS? What types of sites choose to/are recruited to participate in QRIS?

- What are indicators of leadership and readiness to engage in quality improvement?

- What is the baseline status of participating programs on the QRIS matrix and what elements did sites choose to work on for quality improvement?

- What types and how much coaching and technical assistance did sites receive? Was it enough to bring about change?

- How is the coaching capacity to address the needs of sites? How does an assessment of technical assistance intensity play into this?

- Did sites progress on the QRIS matrix framework? Which elements improved the most/least?

Organization of This Report

The focus of this evaluation was primarily on two of the four cohorts that participated in the QRIS RTT pilot (Cohorts 1 and 2). The first section, *Description of Participating QRIS Sites,* provides a general description of all 93 participating sites. The subsequent sections (*Rating Experience and Motivation to Participate, Coaching and Technical Assistance, and Impact on Quality Improvement)* focus on an in-depth evaluation of Cohorts 1 and 2. Finally, this report ends with a set of recommendations co-developed with First 5 Alameda County for continuing implementation of QRIS.

Methods

This evaluation used a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods.

- Three sets of semi-structured interviews with site directors and QRIS administrators.

  o 19 site directors: 13 center-based, 6 family child care

  o 4 administrators

  o Conducted in English (16), Spanish (2), and Cantonese (1)

- One focus group with 10 coaches: 7 generalists and 3 specialists.

- Content analysis was implemented to analyze the interview and focus group data. Atlas.ti software was used.

- Review and analysis of QRIS data from WELS and F5AC's ECCOnline Database: QRIS ratings, assessment scores and coaching and technical assistance data. Excel and SPSS were used to analyze the data.

Description of Participating QRIS Sites

QRIS Site Characteristics

Licensed early care and education centers and family child care homes (FCC) in Alameda County applied to participate in QRIS. F5AC grouped participating sites into four cohorts. Between 2013 and 2016, 93 sites participated in the QRIS pilot[1]. All sites received a free assessment which includes all seven elements of the QRIS Matrix for center based sites and five elements for FCC sites. Based on their scores/ratings, sites received quality improvement coaching and consultation guided by a customized quality improvement plan (QIP). Technical assistance staff also helped link programs to training and professional development resources.

Center Versus Family Child Care

Of the 93 sites 76 percent (71) were center-based sites and 24 percent (22) were family child care homes (Exhibit 1). Among the center-based sites there was a mix of regulatory distinctions, including Title 5, Head Start, Early Head Start, and Title 22. The majority of the center-based sites were Title 5 or Title 5/Head Start blend sites.

Exhibit 1.   Center and FCC (N=93)

Site Type	
Center	76% (71)
Family Child Care Home	24% (22)

Overall Baseline Rating

The mean baseline rating for all 93 sites (Exhibit 2) was 3.2. The evaluation will further describe possible factors that may contribute to differences between types of sites.

Exhibit 2.   Baseline Mean Rating

Site Type	Overall Baseline Rating All (n=93)	Overall Baseline Rating for Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=30)
Overall (n=93)	3.2	2.7
Center (n=71)	3.5	3.0
Family Child Care (n=22)	2.1	2.2

QRIS Matrix Elements

- Child Observation
- Health and Developmental Screening
- Teacher Qualifications
- Teacher-Child Interactions (CLASS)
- Ratio and Group Size*
- Environment Rating (ECERS)
- Director Qualifications*

Not applicable to FCC sites

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[1] Please go to http://www.first5alameda.org/quality-rating-improvement-system for current status on participating sites.

Rating Experience and Motivation to Participate

Since QRIS was a pilot in Alameda County (and California) it was important to understand what motivated these sites to participate, as well as to learn what their rating experience was like. The following themes were identified through interviews with site directors from centers and family child care homes. Also presented in this section are the QRIS matrix elements that sites selected, and corresponding goals identified for quality improvement as informed by the baseline ratings.

Motivation to Participate in QRIS

There were two primary reasons early learning sites were motivated to participate in QRIS. Most sites expressed a **desire for external or professional assessment**, followed by feedback, technical assistance and support to facilitate quality improvement. Gaining access to **professional development opportunities and grant award funds** also encouraged participation. When reflecting on the desire to improve, center directors and family childcare owners emphasized professional development opportunities for staff and leadership. "*I believe that as professionals in early child education, we always need to be up to date with best practices and be better than we are and continually improve,*" offered one director. Grant money and stipends are also draws for participants wanting to invest in materials and resources for quality programming. "One of the motivations for me was the grant," said a family childcare owner, "because I am missing a lot of things to [make my program] better structured."

Experience with Initial Rating

Interview participants generally agreed that **preparing for assessment day entailed minimal effort and costs.** Aside from the time it took to compile the binder, most interview participants felt it was "relatively easy" to prepare for their assessor's visit. Interviewees explained they did nothing "special" to ensure an authentic assessment of the program.

After sites reviewed their baseline assessment results, they felt the results largely aligned with their expectations. Center and FCC directors who received ratings felt that they were accurate and resonated with what they saw in their programs. "It was mirroring what we were seeing," explained one center director, "[...] It was so spot-on [...], it was really easy to have management and staff buy-in." Further, site directors also explained that **the assessment process was most helpful and effective when communication between the assessor and site staff was robust and clear prior to and during the process**. Several center directors and family childcare owners wanted a better explanation of what to expect from the assessment process from beginning to end, including when to expect scores and a clear description of next steps.

> "We want to make sure we are providing the highest quality program to our families... so to be able to have an outside source come in and let us know what areas we can improve on and help provide TA with - that was the main reason"
>
> —Center Site Director

Once sites received the results of the assessment that included an overall rating and ratings for each QRIS element, a customized quality improvement plan is developed with coaches and consultants. They work closely with directors, teachers and family child care owner/operators to identify QRIS elements to focus on and goals to work towards.

Exhibit 3 below shows the QRIS elements sites chose to focus on based on their initial rating. All sites selected the **environment rating** as a focus followed by nearly all sites selecting **developmental screening** (97%) and **teacher-child interactions** (97%).

Exhibit 3.   QRIS Focus Elements

QRIS Element	%	n
Environment rating	100%	30
Developmental screening	97%	29
Teacher-child interaction	97%	29
Teacher qualifications	87%	26
Child observations	73%	22
Director qualifications	37%	11
Ratio and group size	3%	1

There were several goals sites could choose to focus on as part of their quality improvement plan (QIP). Exhibit 4 below displays the goals that the majority of sites selected.

Exhibit 4.   QIP Goals Identified by Sites

QIP Goal	%	n
Enhance program environment and learning activities for children.	100%	30
Enhance teacher knowledge and skills through participation in trainings, workshops and higher education courses.	87%	26
Enhance teachers' observational skills and use to develop curriculum.	73%	22
Enhance teachers' ability to provide sound instructional support.	67%	20
Implement universal developmental screenings.	57%	17

Leadership and Site Readiness

Key indicators of site readiness for QRIS assessment and rating include motivated staff, a supportive administration, and access to resources.
Center directors and family childcare owners emphasized the importance of staff investment in the change process, as well as receptivity to constructive criticism. "*Be open to the changes,*" offered one center director, "*and try not to be on guard and defensive when assessors point out things you need to improve.*" Supportive

administrations also contributed to site readiness for QRIS assessment and rating.

Key characteristics for fully engaged center-based sites included directors that were supported by their agency, a stable administrative foundation, and time dedicated to quality improvement. According to one interview, center site directors were more likely to "be able to motivate staff for change and to make change" if they are supported by their agencies to have the leadership and power to improve quality.

For family-based child care, key characteristics of readiness included site owners/directors/teachers who felt empowered to make changes and who were open to changes. One administrator explained that because of the position that FCC site owners are in (that they are both director and teacher), they have the decision-making power and they can "just take off." Once FCC sites are rated, it already shows a level of readiness and motivation. They then need to have the "openness to change" and consider the perspective of raters and coaches. On the flip side, since it is just one person, if they are affected by a personal event such as an illness or their personal family issue, it can easily derail the QRIS process and it is "hard to keep quality improvement going."

Coaching and Technical Assistance

Once sites develop their QIP as described in the previous section they receive on-site coaching and consultation for to help staff improve the overall quality of their program. This section of the report describes the quality improvement experience of the two participating cohorts over two years, including the dosage of coaching and consultation.

Coaching and Consultation Experience

Coaching and consultations were described by teachers, directors and administrators as invaluable. Site directors and owners appreciated a **tailored, team-based approach to coaching**; **that coaches held sites accountable to making improvements**; their **CLASS and ERS knowledge** and guidance; and overall dedication and encouragement.

F5AC QRIS administrators explained that they implemented a **well-established TA and coaching model** with clear structures and procedures that also emphasizes the importance of supporting its workforce. When asked to share successes of the coaching program, one administrator highlighted the strength of the program's structure pointing to its protocols, policies, and templates that "help frame the work" for coaches and allows new coaches "to feel empowered and confident in what they are doing." She also emphasized the built-in supports the program offers coaches such as a monthly meeting where coaches have the opportunity to "reflect, discuss, and problem-solve together."

Coaching and consultation was tailored for individual site quality improvement needs. Types of coaching and consultation included one-on-one, workshops, in-service days, outside experts, and referrals. One director explained,

> "[The staff] did outside trainings but inside we had a coach. And he came in to do specific CLASS coaching for the teachers. […] They got the same individual training for the ITERS and ECERS. I think that empowered them to know, 'Wow this is my room and I can make changes."

Overall, family childcare owners reported having an especially positive coaching and consultation experience. Family childcare owners appreciated the knowledge, resources, flexibility, and support provided by coaches. "*My coach was available at all hours. When I needed her she would come the next day. Overall, I was very satisfied.*" Another owner valued coach consistency and follow-through that resulted in increased accountability by staff and explained, "*In terms of the CLASS coaching itself, it is good. They are there and they are holding staff accountable to what they say they are going to do. They keep checking in with us to make sure that we are doing it, they are very consistent.*" Another family childcare owner explained, "*We worked as a team with my coach who gave me her full support. Every time I had an idea I would consult her. So for me, it was super.*" Another owner described her coach as a cheerleader and appreciated receiving a certificate from her coach honoring 20 years as a childcare owner and explained, "*I know it's a piece of paper, it's a certificate, it doesn't' have money attached, but its posted on my wall. My parents did see it [and I thought] wow, someone else thinks that I'm okay. So those little things [made a difference].*"

"Through our discussions [with teachers], I've seen light bulbs go on, and that's when I feel like, 'wow, this is really impactful.' We ask really open-ended questions for them to reflect and come up with what will work in their program."

—Coach

CLASS

Teacher-child interactions was an area that sites reported needing the most support. Many site directors and teachers reported that it was either new to them or an assessment that they were not as familiar with compared to assessments such as ECERS or DRDP.

Coaches reported that they relied most heavily on CLASS and ERS to inform their plans and monitor progress.

Dosage

Since coaching and consultation is tailored to individual site needs, administrators, coaches and teachers did not articulate a specific formula or amount of hours or frequency of visits for quality improvement. During a focus group with coaches, they described how **the dosage and intensity of technical assistance is individualized and depend on a range of factors, including program infrastructure, staff capacity and access to resources.** One coach noted that while some sites struggled with limited capacity and resources, other sites were *"very high-functioning, with a leadership team, learning materials, [and] well-educated staff"* from the start. At high need sites, TA providers emphasized that consistency is especially important: *"You have to show up, be very consistent – dosage on a regular basis."* While focus group participants noted that at *"less intense sites you can start out on a weekly [schedule], but then you can clearly scale back because they're taking the ball and they're running with it, then they don't need as much coaching."*

One TA provider also described the need to be flexible to shift the focus or intensity of different coaching elements over time. Alongside ensuring the implementation of action plans in the second year of QRIS, this coach stated the importance of "building sustainability" in anticipation of on-site coaching coming to an end.

QRIS data showed that there was a range in the number of hours of coaching and technical assistance sites received (Exhibit 5). On average, per classroom, Title 5 sites received the largest amount of technical assistance followed by FCC sites.

> "I did CLASS. I had to take videos of myself in the classroom. I liked it a lot. It was hard because I had to plan my activities and those of the kids. But I learned so much about what I do on a daily basis. I saw how to focus on children's needs and how to reflect on my practice"
>
> **–FCC Owner**

Exhibit 5. Dosage of Coaching and Consultation in Hours After Two Years

Hours of Coaching and Consultation	Overall Hrs	Head Start Hrs	Title 5 Hrs	Title 22 Hrs	FCC Hrs
Mean by Site	93	105	158	64	65
Est. Mean per Classroom[1]	--	46	93	36	65
Minimum	4	51	78	4	40
Maximum	330	207	330	125	104

[1]Since several center-based sites have multiple classrooms, an estimate of the mean hours per classroom was calculated by dividing the mean number of site hours by the average number of classrooms.

Intensity Prediction

At the time of baseline assessments for sites, F5AC administrative staff made predictions on the level of intensity of technical assistance that may be necessary

for each site. This intensity assessment appears to be accurate based on how they corresponded to the actual mean hours after the completion of two years of quality improvement efforts. The predicted lower intensity sites received fewer hours of coaching and consultation compared to the predicted higher intensity sites (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6.   Mean hours of coaching and consultation by intensity level prediction

Intensity Level Prediction	n	Mean Hours
Low	4	73
Medium	12	79
High	13	92

Barriers and Challenges to Coaching and Consultation

Time

By far and away, providers, coaches and administrators stated that time is the biggest challenge and barrier to quality improvement: time to prepare, receive coaching, reflect, practice and fully incorporate quality improvement efforts. It is also important to note and recognize that there are policy and systems implications associated with time for quality improvement. Time is attached to release time, substitutes, allowable professional development hours, etc. As one administrator explained, "*There are so many different issues with relief time and unions and part-time staff and we really feel that coaching is most effective when the whole team can come together and have uninterrupted time and protected time.*" Administrators felt that having this time was a characteristic of sites that were more engaged and successful through the QRIS process.

Equitable Distribution of Resources

Another challenge included some sites not having the funds to make necessary improvements either physically to the site or to receive external trainings/professional development. Sites that expressed this challenge saw this as an equity issue across a diversity of sites. Currently QRIS incentives and awards are distributed relatively equally across participants. Providers, coaches and administrators agree, however, that sites with lower ratings and lower resources at baseline may need a higher investment of funds for higher intensity coaching. Also FCC and smaller sites may have a different quality improvement experience due to existing standards and overall resources available to them. As one site director stated, "*Head Start programs would rate the highest, evidently, because they have resources and already have standards in place. [QRIS] should be looking more at supporting underfunded programs... I just think they need to look at it more equitably.*" An administrator expressed:

> "*I am concerned about the way that the funding allocations, the reward money, are given out. I feel like it is inequitable. I would really like to see more money going into sites that are rated in lower end of the tiers, and less money going into the sites that have already received [higher ratings]. If we are really QRIS and we are looking at improvement, those lower-resourced sites are really the ones that need more of an investment.*"

"We need more time. There's a lot of work we take home. It's not fair, but we love the kids"

—Center Site Director

Impact on Quality Improvement

This section of the report describes what this investment of time and money yielded for quality improvement over two years in terms of changes or movement on the QRIS matrix framework and CLASS and ECERS assessments, as well as examples of changes in actual practice and physical space. Outcome data from WELS and ECConline are summarized here.

Rating and Score Differences

QRIS Ratings

QRIS data showed that overall improvements were made across all elements as seen in Exhibit 7. The largest mean difference was seen in the **developmental health screening** element followed by **environment ratings**. Those were two areas that nearly all sites chose to focus on for their quality improvement efforts (see Exhibit 3 above).

Exhibit 7.   Mean QRIS Ratings at Baseline and Second Rating (n=30)

	Tier	Ch. Obs.	Dev. Hlth. Scr.	Tchr. Qual.	CLASS	Ratio/Grp	ERS	Dir. Qual.
Baseline rating	2.7	2.3	2.0	2.5	3.1	3.9	2.9	3.3
Second rating	3.2	2.7	3.1	2.9	3.4	4.3	3.6	3.8
Mean Difference	.41	.31	1.0	.28	.34	.12	.69	.37

Overall, FCC sites made the largest overall rating improvement (see Exhibit 8) suggesting they may have benefitted the most from participation in QRIS.

Exhibit 8.   Mean QRIS Rating Change by Site Type (n=30)

	Overall	HS	Title 5	Title 22	FCC
Mean Difference	.41	.43	.33	.33	.50

Overall, participating sites demonstrated the following improvements based on QRIS data:

- **41 percent (n=12) improved their overall QRIS rating**

- **48 percent (n=14) improved their environment rating**

- **45 percent (n=13) improved their developmental screening rating**

- **28 percent (n=8) improved their teacher-child interaction rating**

- **31 percent (n=9)were at a tier 4 or 5 by the second rating compared to 20 percent (n=6) at initial rating**
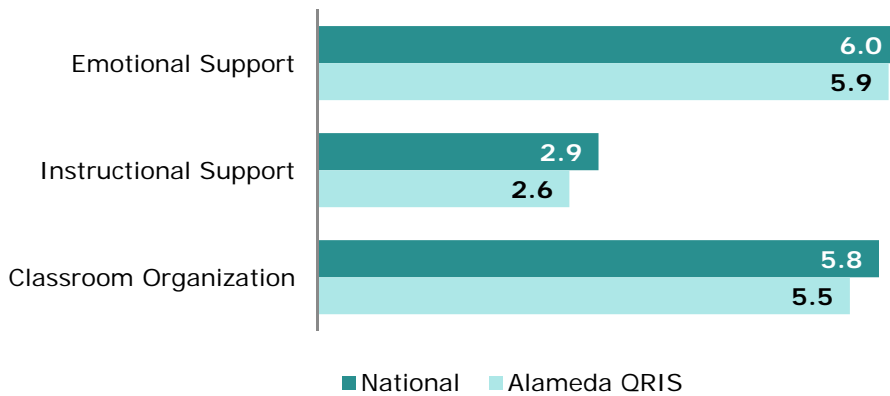
CLASS

Modest improvements were made in the area of teacher-child interactions based on the CLASS assessment scores (Exhibit 9). The largest difference was demonstrated in the area of instructional support.

Exhibit 9. Mean CLASS Scores at Baseline and Second Assessment (n=30)

	CLASS Emotional Support	CLASS Instruct. Support	CLASS Classrm Org	Toddler Emo/Beh Support	Toddler Engaged Support
Baseline score	5.7	2.3	5.4	5.3	2.5
Second score	5.9	2.6	5.5	5.4	2.8
Mean Difference	.36	.42	.21	.10	.33

When comparing the second CLASS scores of the QRIS sites with the national average (see Exhibit 10), the QRIS sites have moved closer to the national average.

Exhibit 10. Mean Second Assessment CLASS Scores compared to National Average

	National	Alameda QRIS
Emotional Support	6.0	5.9
Instructional Support	2.9	2.6
Classroom Organization	5.8	5.5

ECERS

Similar to CLASS, overall gains across ECERS domains were modest (Exhibit 11).

Exhibit 11. Mean ECERS Scores at Baseline and Second Assessment (n=30)

	Space Furn.	Person. Care	Listen Talk	Activities	Interact	Prog. Struc.	Parents Staff
Baseline score	3.9	2.5	4.2	3.7	4.6	4.1	5.6
Second score	4.1	3.0	4.2	4.0	4.4	4.5	5.9
Mean Difference	.25	.50	.07	.39	-.07	.41	.32

Relationship to Dosage

Sites that improved their overall QRIS rating (n=12) received an average of 88 hours of coaching and consultation which is slightly more than sites that did not improve their rating (84 hours), however this difference was not statistically significant. In other words, although there was a positive trend, there was not a significant association between dosage of coaching and consultation and rating improvement.

Exhibit 12. QRIS rating change versus hours of coaching and consultation (n=30)

QRIS Rating Change	Mean Hours
Positive Change	88*
No/Negative Change	84

*not significant

Relationship to Site Type

FCC sites were significantly (p<.05) more likely to improve their ERS rating compared to center-based sites, as seen in Exhibit 13 below. Eighty percent of FCC sites improved compared to just 31 percent of center sites. This could possibly be due to a larger proportion of FCC sites that had room for change compared to center-based sites. Overall, FCC sites were no less likely to improve their QRIS rating than center-based sites.

Exhibit 13. ERS score change versus site type (n=30)

ERS Score Change	% FCC	% Center
Positive Change	**80%***	**31%**

*p<.05

In a related analysis, center-based sites were significantly more likely (p<.05) to be at or reach a Tier 4 rating than FCC sites (Exhibit 14). When taking into consideration the overall baseline rating, resources and the amount of coaching and consultation between the two types of sites (see Exhibit 5) and regulatory

standards, it may have been easier for center-based sites to reach a tier 4 rating or higher compared to FCC sites.

Exhibit 14. Tier 4 at second rating versus site type

Tier 4	% FCC	% Center
Tier 4 at Second Rating	10%	47%*

*p<.05

This finding also reaffirms the current regulatory standards of the different types of early care and education sites, e.g., Head Start must at least meet the qualifications at the Tier 3 rating versus FCC sites that need to meet a licensing standard. Sites may be working to meet **or** exceed their own standards.

Relationship to Intensity Predictions

Sites with low intensity predictions were significantly more likely to demonstrate an improvement in their CLASS rating (p<.05). This finding supports concern that was expressed in interviews regarding the equitable distribution of QRIS resources, i.e., high intensity sites may have needed more resources to make change. It also supports other interview findings that FCC and Title 22 sites may not have much experience with CLASS and/or have chosen to focus on other elements first.

Exhibit 15. Positive CLASS score change versus TA intensity predictions

Rating/Score Change	Low	Medium	High
Positive CLASS Change*	67%	42%	8%

*p<.05

Second Rating

Site directors were asked about their second rating and whether they thought it was reflective of their quality improvement experience. Although the largest proportion of directors agreed with their second rating, agreement with the second rating was not as resounding as the baseline ratings. Several respondents reported receiving the same score both times. One director explained staff disappointment after receiving the same rating for the first and second rating and said,

> "[…] the teachers were not very happy. […] the entire team worked very hard to move the quality of work up from where it was, so I think staff still need to work harder to correct some things we do in terms of habits daily, so I am totally in support of that. But I think that the kind of work we put in we were expecting to not get the score that we got."

Other interviewees reported that their second ratings accurately reflected the changes they had made. One director explained, "The teachers worked hard in their environment and working with the children, so I knew we would receive a certain score."

"QRIS is about helping teachers understand how to be more comfortable with back and forth conversation and have the critical and open ended questions that encourages critical thinking."

—Center Site Director

Evidence of Quality Improvement

Site directors provided descriptions of quality improvements that were made during the QRIS process. These included improvements in health and safety and teacher-child interactions. Teachers reported that they observed more positive behaviors and more verbal communication. A center director explained, "*The negative behavior obviously is almost eliminated. Children are more responsive. The language skills really, really exceeded our expectations. Even the environment - the children are more calm, its more soothing, there isn't as much fighting, children can talk to each other and let each other know how they are feeling [...] so there's a lot more communication among children, [among] children and staff, and then [among] staff and staff.*" Another center director explained, "*I've noticed, particularity in preschool, they are calmer. They used to be loud and aggressive. They are a lot different now.*" Several interviewees reported an increase in children washing their hands. One center director explained, "*One evident [change] that you will find is children spending a really long time washing their hands [...]it evidently is keeping children healthier and keeping attendance stronger, keeping children coming to school every day and staff attendance also because I know that when they are sick, they cough and staff also gets sick. I see less of that now.*"

Site directors also reported more parent engagement in practices related to healthy child development and increased understanding and satisfaction with quality of care. One center director explained, "*...parents became really excited and involved. I mean at one point when they were starting to feel frustrated with [implementing the] ASQ and ASQ-SE, I think knowing we were working as a team trying to improve quality is what really got them through that. I think them having more insight into a process and how we were trying to get somewhere was good for them.*" Another center director explained, "*I think that we have definitely stepped up our goal of parent engagement and parents' participation in classrooms, activities, and school events.*" Family Childcare owners also spoke about increased parent satisfaction with the quality of the childcare. One owner explained, "*...when the parents come in they say, 'I wish my house was a clean as your school.' But it wasn't always like that.*"

The following exhibit lists examples site directors cited in interviews of changes in practices and physical space as a result of QRIS. ✚

Exhibit 16. Examples of changes in practice and physical space as a result of QRIS

Changes in practice or physical space
• Increased hand-washing and installation of additional sinks
• Supporting a teacher earning a bachelor's degree
• Improved teacher interactions with children
• Increased parent engagement
• Improving classroom ratios
• Improved sanitation practices
• New play equipment
• Improved fences, deck, locks and gates
• Teachers collecting data to inform lesson plans
• Increased completion of ASQ & ASQ-SE

"Children are more responsive. The language skills really, really exceeded our expectations. Even the environment — the children are more calm, it's more soothing, there isn't as much fighting, children can talk to each other and let each other know how they are feeling."

—Center Site Director

Implications and Recommendations

This evaluation provided an opportunity to use and examine different types of data to inform the status of QRIS in Alameda County. The findings are intended for users to learn how to further deepen the effectiveness and impact of QRIS to improve teaching practices, engage families, and prepare children for kindergarten. Based on the findings, here are a few considerations moving forward.

Looking Ahead

Local QRIS Implementation

- As more sites participate in QRIS, there will be increasing opportunities to use the accumulation of data to set more measureable quality improvement target goals for sites and coaches, as well as opportunities for local leadership around the quality improvement process.

- Engage parents in the QRIS process by incorporating their perspectives. How do parents define quality? Do they see a difference in quality at their child's site? What parent engagement expectations do they have? How do they interpret a QRIS rating? How would they use QRIS information?

- Repeat this evaluation with later cohorts or participants in QRIS. The cohorts featured in this evaluation were "early implementers" of QRIS and this may have been a factor in some of the findings. Learning to understand the matrix, having fewer coaches and assessors, and the lag time between completing assessments and receiving ratings are examples of factors that can affect implementation, but have also been addressed as a result of this evaluation.

- Obtain and incorporate child outcomes in a future QRIS evaluation study to explore the relationship between quality improvement and child development outcomes.

QRIS Policy Considerations

- This evaluation showed that there is a clear distinction between two types of quality improvement resources that can be given to early education sites: funding in the form of grants, stipends, and incentives; and amount of professional development, coaching and technical assistance. This may be important to distinguish when considering the equitable distribution of resources. In other words does a site that receives a lower rating need more investment of funds, or of coaching and technical assistance in order to make change/movement?

- It is important to understand the relationship between the regulatory standards of early education site types (e.g., Head Start, Title V) and the QRIS ratings matrix. The differences in the baseline ratings between site types are typically on par with the differences in their regulatory standards. This may create a skewed perception of QRIS ratings between sites. It may be necessary to consider ways to factor in such standards.

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