FLORIDA'S GOLD SEAL QUALITY CARE POLICY STUDY

2013

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Children's Forum extends our appreciation to the early learning coalitions that contributed to this study through their collaboration with data and support; specifically, the Early Learning Coalitions of Brevard, Broward, Hillsborough, Miami-Dade, Orange, Palm Beach, Sarasota, and Southwest Florida (Hendry, Glades, Lee and Collier counties). We also wish to thank the Department of Children and Families Office of Child Care Regulation who also provided data and historical information on the Gold Seal programs in Florida. Finally, we express our sincere appreciation for child care programs that strive to make a difference in the lives of children through their dedication, commitment and efforts to provide quality early learning experiences for the children in their care.

2807 Remington Green Circle • Tallahassee, FL 32308
(850) 681-7002 • *www.thechildrensforum.com*

Research Team

Phyllis Kalifeh, Ed.D.
President and CEO
Principal Investigator and Lead Author

Edit and Review

Melissa Clements, Ph.D.
Vice President
Research and Evaluation

Beverly Esposito, Ph.D.
Vice President
Quality Initiatives

Joy Stover
Graphic Design

Suggested Citation:

Kalifeh, P., Clements, M. and Esposito, B. (2013) *Florida's Gold Seal Quality Care Study.* Children's Forum, Tallahassee, FL.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Florida's Gold Seal Quality Care program, created in statute in 1996, serves as a policy lever to improve program quality in child care and serve as a symbol of quality for parents when choosing a child care provider for their children. Child care programs can receive a Gold Seal certificate if they submit evidence that they are accredited under one of the approved accrediting associations to the Florida Department of Children and Families, the state agency responsible for child care licensing and regulation. The state invests approximately $33 million in additional payments for Gold Seal programs for children receiving child care subsidies through the Florida Office of Early Learning. Gold Seal programs, inclusive of private for profit, non-profit, faith-based and public schools, are approved as providers of the state's Voluntary Pre-kindergarten program. Additional incentives include property tax abatement for ad valorem taxes for programs that are private, for profit businesses. Sales taxes on certain educational supplies, materials and equipment are also waived for Gold Seal programs which is estimated to cost the state approximately $200,000 per year.

This study examined the differences in observed quality between Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal programs in 1,760 early childhood center-based and home-based settings yielding 3,506 assessments in 11 Florida counties over a two year period from 2010-2012. Observable quality was measured by the Environment Rating Scales (ERS), a valid and reliable set of instruments for measuring quality in early childhood settings. The study also examined the differences between programs accredited by one of 11 accrediting associations approved under Gold Seal and observed quality as measured by the Environment Rating Scales.

Findings showed that Gold Seal programs scored higher on measures of quality than non-Gold Seal programs and differences were statistically significant, although the differences were relatively modest. Four of the 11 accrediting associations approved under Florida's Gold Seal policy were positively associated with higher scores on the ERS. In spite of the positive findings, the distribution of scores showed that only 19.4% of Gold Seal programs scored in the good to excellent range compared to 14.9% of non-Gold Seal programs. Further, 11.4% of Gold Seal programs and 21.3% of non-Gold Seal programs scored in the range of inadequate care. These results suggests that while Florida's Gold Seal programs scored slightly higher than non-Gold Seal programs on the ERS, overall program quality in the majority of programs was minimally adequate in the state.

INTRODUCTION

Early learning matters. It is widely held that the experiences of young children from birth to kindergarten create the foundation upon which later success in school and life is built. Numerous studies demonstrate the value of high quality early childhood programs in ameliorating conditions contributing to child vulnerability and gaps in later school achievement (Ramey & Campbell, 1991,Reynolds, 1991; Schweinhart et al, 2005;). Moreover, considering the changes in American society over the past 40 years and the influx of women with young children into the workforce, the environments where children spend their time are increasingly important. Efforts to strengthen systems supporting young children and their families to improve outcomes have been undertaken at the federal, state and community levels with varying degrees of success. Limited resources challenge policymakers to evaluate existing strategies and outcomes to make wise investments of public dollars.

In response to the growing research base touting the success of intervention strategies for children birth to kindergarten in high quality child care programs, the Gold Seal Quality Care Program was created in 1996 as a policy lever to improve child care quality in regulated programs or programs exempt from regulation as defined in the Florida Statutes (Title 29, Ch. 402.281).[1] The legislative intent of the policy is to provide public recognition for programs that are accredited by approved accrediting associations and, thereby, provide an easily identifiable Gold Seal symbol that parents can associate with higher quality. In 1999, the Legislature revised the statute to provide tax incentives for participation in the Gold Seal program to encourage provider participation. Child care programs possessing a Gold Seal certificate can request exemption from local ad valorem property taxes and exemption from sales tax on certain educational materials and supplies from their local county tax appraiser or the state Department of Revenue.

In 2004, the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK) legislation passed providing free prekindergarten for every child who is four years old by September 1st of each year (F.S. Ch.1002.53). The passage of the legislation immediately challenged existing provider capacity to accommodate the influx of preschoolers into the program, which provides 540 hours of instruction in a typical 180-day school year or a condensed 320-hour summer program. Florida opted for a voucher program rather than a public-school based program and relied on the private market to meet the demand. The VPK statute mandated program standards that exceed the existing child care licensing standards. These standards include an age-appropriate curriculum and higher credentials for staff similar to those standards published by some accreditation associations. Therefore, to qualify as a license-exempt provider of VPK services, programs must be accredited. The Gold Seal certificate serves as evidence for this requirement.

Another incentive for Gold Seal participation is higher reimbursement rates for children served through the Office of Early Learning's school readiness program. The school readiness program provides child care subsidies for low to moderate wage earning families to help offset the high cost of care on a sliding fee scale so that parents can maintain employment or seek education leading to self-sufficiency. Child care providers with a Gold Seal serving children funded by the program receive enhanced rates of up to 20% more than the county established reimbursement payment rate relative to programs without a Gold Seal. The Florida Office of Early Learning reported that $33.3 million was expended in 2010-2011 for enhanced Gold Seal payments. The state Department of Revenue also estimates that approximately $200,000 in taxes from the sales of educational materials and supplies are waived for Gold Seal providers, though the actual amount could not be confirmed.

The conceptual model for the study is based on the ecological theory posited by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) and provides a framework to understand and study human development. The teacher is arguably the most important determinant of quality in the child care center environment (Bowman, 2000) and influences the outcomes of children and how they grow and develop as human beings and thus, is central to child care as a system. The ecological theory posits that the individual develops within five interrelated nested environmental systems. Applying this framework to the study of the

[1]Programs regulated under Florida Statutes are subject to onsite inspection for compliance with health, safety, facilities, transportation and personnel standards. Florida is one of 14 states nationally that allows exemptions from regulation or licensure and includes faith-based programs operating in conjunction with a church or private school and are not subject to inspection but must attest that they maintain comparable standards. It is estimated that 8% of children in Florida attend unregulated child care programs.

The Florida Office of Early Learning reported that $33.3 million was expended in 2010-2011 for enhanced Gold Seal payments.

Gold Seal program helps to understand and situate the important role of the early childhood teacher within a broader context of the child care system subject to the policy environment and the quest for improved quality.

Research Questions

This study design examined whether or not the policy lever, in the form of the Gold Seal Quality Care Program, plays a role in improving the quality of care that children experience. For the quantitative analysis, data on Environment Rating Scales (ERS) that assess classroom quality were used to assess the quality of care of programs that participated in the Gold Seal Quality Care program as compared to those programs that did not participate in Gold Seal Quality Care. In addition, the quantitative analysis explored whether or not there were observable differences in quality based on the ERS by the 11 approved Gold Seal accrediting associations. ERS data were collected in 11 counties across the state where early learning coalitions assess classroom quality using the standardized, valid and reliable observation ERS assessments. Finally, the relationship between overall program quality and Gold Seal status was examined. The questions addressed by this study were:

1. Do child care programs that possess a Gold Seal Quality Care certificate demonstrate better scores on observed quality as measured by the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) than non-Gold Seal programs?
2. Are there significant differences in observed quality between programs accredited by the Gold Seal accrediting associations as measured by scores on the ERS?

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection Procedures

An analysis was conducted to determine which coalitions used the ERS and the quality of the datasets available for inclusion. It was determined that there were seven early learning coalitions (ELCs) representing 11 counties that were eligible for inclusion in the study including Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Broward, Hillsborough, Orange, Brevard, Lee, Sarasota, Hendry, Collier and Glades. While some ERS assessments were conducted in a few north Florida counties, coalition staff conducted them or only a portion of the assessment tool was scored. Therefore, these counties were excluded from the analysis as their reliability could not be determined. While the counties investigated represented a mix of urban and rural areas, they were geographically located in the central and southern parts of Florida. Each of the early learning coalition executive directors agreed to participate and allow use of their coalition's data for the study.

Most of the coalitions contracted with independent organizations for assessments. The independent organizations contracting with the ELCs were two nonprofit agencies, the Children's Forum and Devereux of Florida, and one county-level government in Broward County. All of the assessors, either employed by the coalitions or hired through the independent organizations, met criteria suggested by observation instruments' authors for reliability on the instruments. Early learning coalition executive directors were contacted about the study and provided a letter of agreement expressing their willingness to participate. ERS data were provided by either the early learning coalition or obtained from the Children's Forum research department. The ERS assessment data were matched with the Gold Seal (GS) child care center and family child care home database to determine which programs had both assessment scores and were also Gold Seal centers. The Gold Seal data included both the identification of the Gold Seal program and the accrediting association that qualified the program for the Gold Seal. The analyses were conducted using SPSS, version 17.0 statistical software package. The final dataset included data on 3,506 classroom observations in 1,760 child care programs in 11 counties from 2010-2012.

Measures

There are three ERS assessment instruments designed for use with various age groups or within specific settings as follows: Infant / Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 2003), Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 2005), Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale – Revised (Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 2007). The Environment Rating Scales have been used in large-scale research projects including Head Start FACES study that included more than 400 Head Start classrooms (Zill & Resnick, 1998). The ERS were also used as a comprehensive quality measure in the National Child Care Staffing Study (Whitebook, 1989) and the Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study (1995). Other major studies in which the ECERS-R was used include the Early Head Start Study, Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES 2003), Georgia Early Care Study (GECS), More at Four (MAF) Evaluation in North Carolina, National Center for Early Development and Learning (NCEDL), Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (NICHD SECCYD), and the Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Research Program (PCER). Other states have adopted the use of the ERS as a tool for program evaluation and improvement (Clifford, Reszka & Rossbach, 2010).

The ERS are organized around seven subscales for each instrument. Reflected in the subscales are items with specific indicators for the assessor to observe and score accordingly. There are 39 items in the ECERS-R, 43 items in the ITERS-R and 38 items in the FCCERS-R. The ERS have been tested for reliability and validity and align with indicators of program quality reflected in various research studies (Clifford, Reska & Rossbach, 2010). The authors require intensive training and reliability on the scales at a minimum of 85% with re-checks of reliability for every 6-10 assessments. For assessors with 90% or above reliability, re-checks are performed for every 15-20 assessments. If reliability falls below 85% on re-checks, the assessor does not conduct assessments until reliability is re-established. The counties included in the study adhered to procedures prescribed by the authors to ensure reliability in the performance of assessments.

Only scores from six of the seven subscales were used in this study as coalitions did not require scores for subscale seven which assesses the variables of parents and staff due to the limited time available for observations.

The authors of the ERS provide a rubric explaining the overall meaning of the scores from a qualitative perspective. Scores below "3" are described as inadequate quality and not conducive to overall health, well-being and school readiness of children. Scores ranging from "3" up to a score of "5" are described as minimal to adequate and the quality of care that children experience is mediocre. Scores of "5" to "7" describe programs that are good to excellent offering children growth-enhancing experiences leading to positive outcomes.

Strengths and Limitations

This study was the first of its kind on Gold Seal programs. The strength of this study was that it provided objective data on the quality of child care programs using tools that are valid and reliable. The data were drawn over a period of two years from 2010 – 2012. The ERS data on Gold Seal programs by accrediting agencies provided information on how the accrediting associations differ on measures of quality in practice.

The limitation of this study is that causality cannot be inferred from the findings. There are many variables that contribute to quality in child care programs. The Gold Seal program is a proxy for quality by virtue of accreditation. The process of obtaining accreditation through an approved accrediting association is one that may contribute towards quality improvement but the full extent of factors contributing to quality cannot be explained by this study. However, the results do demonstrate differences between both Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal programs as well as between accrediting associations.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analyses

The sample included 3,506 individual classroom assessment cases assessed using the Environmental Rating Scales child care as seen in Table 1, representing both child care centers and family child care homes in 11 counties. The table provides descriptive information on the distribution of assessments for the full sample and between Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal programs. The sample shows that 38.73% (n=1,358) of the assessments occurred in Gold Seal settings and 61.27% (n=2,148) occurred in non-Gold Seal settings.

The ERS type refers to the setting type (infant-toddler, preschool or family child care) which dictates the ERS assessment tool used. The distribution across Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal show that 34.4% of assessments in Gold Seal programs occurred in infant-toddler classrooms using the Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ITERS-R), 55.99% occurred in preschool classrooms using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale - Revised (ECERS-R) while 9.61% occurred in family child care homes using the Family Child Care Home Environment Rating Scale - Revised (FCCERS-R). The total number of assessments occurred in 1,760 different centers or family child care homes for an average of nearly two per program.

Table 1. Descriptive Data ERS 2010 - 2012

Variable	All	Gold Seal	Non-Gold Seal
Independent Variables: n=	3,506	1,358	2,148
Gold Seal	38.73%	100%	--
Non-Gold Seal	61.27%	--	100%
ERS Type:			
Infant-Toddler (ITERS-R)	34.40%	34.50%	34.40%
Preschool (ECERS-R)	55.99%	59.00%	54.10%
Family Child Care (FCCERS-R)	9.61%	6.50%	11.50%
Number of Assessments	3,506		
Number of Centers/Homes	1,760		
Avg # of Assessments Per Program	1.99		

The accrediting associations affiliated with the assessments are reflected in Table 2. Each of the accrediting associations participating in the Gold Seal program is listed with its respective abbreviations, full name of the association, and the number of assessments that occurred in programs accredited through the association and corresponding percentage of assessments. The abbreviated name is used in describing the results due to the length of the accrediting association names.

As seen in Table 2, the majority of assessments were conducted in APPLE accredited programs (50.29%). The remaining assessments were distributed across the remaining 10 accrediting associations. The next highest percentage of assessments was NAC (15.76%) and NAEYC (14.95%). The three accrediting associations specifically referenced by name in the Florida Statutes are: National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA) and National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC). Other accrediting association standards must substantially meet or exceed those published by these associations.

The mean scores and subscale scores were examined as shown in Table 3. T-tests were conducted to test for significance with a p-value <.05 and are noted with an asterisk. The overall mean score for the ERS was 3.96 for the entire sample on a seven-point scale. Subscale scores were reflected for each of the areas. Subscale 5 reflected the highest overall mean at 4.66. This subscale examined the quality of interactions between adults and children in the classrooms as well as the interactions among the children. The table also shows the

Table 2. Descriptive Data for Gold Seal 2010-2012

ABBR	Gold Seal Accrediting Associations	N	%
ACSI	Association for Christian Schools International	7	0.52%
ACTS	Association of Christian Teachers and Schools	4	0.29%
APPLE	Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment	683	50.29%
COA	Council on Accreditation	15	1.10%
NAC	National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Pgrms.	214	15.76%
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children	203	14.95%
NAFCC	National Association for Family Child Care	89	6.55%
NCPSA	National Council for Private School Accreditation	15	1.10%
NECPA	National Early Childhood Program Accreditation	56	4.12%
SACS	AdvanceED SACS of Florida	45	3.31%
UMAP	United Methodist Association of Preschools	27	1.99%
	TOTAL	**1,358**	**100%**

The majority of assessments (50.3%) were conducted in APPLE accredited programs .

distribution of mean scores between Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal. The table shows that the difference in mean scores between Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal programs was significant with Gold Seal with a mean score of 4.14 overall as compared to non-Gold Seal programs with a mean score of 3.85. Significant differences between Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal programs were found for all of the subscale scores with the exception of Subscale 2: Personal Care Routines. Mean scores for both Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal programs reflected minimal care, according to the ERS. As indicated earlier, scores below 3 are considered inadequate, scores ranging from 3 to 5 are described as adequate and scores of 5 to 7 are considered good to excellent representing high quality.

Table 3. ERS Overall and Subscale Mean Scores

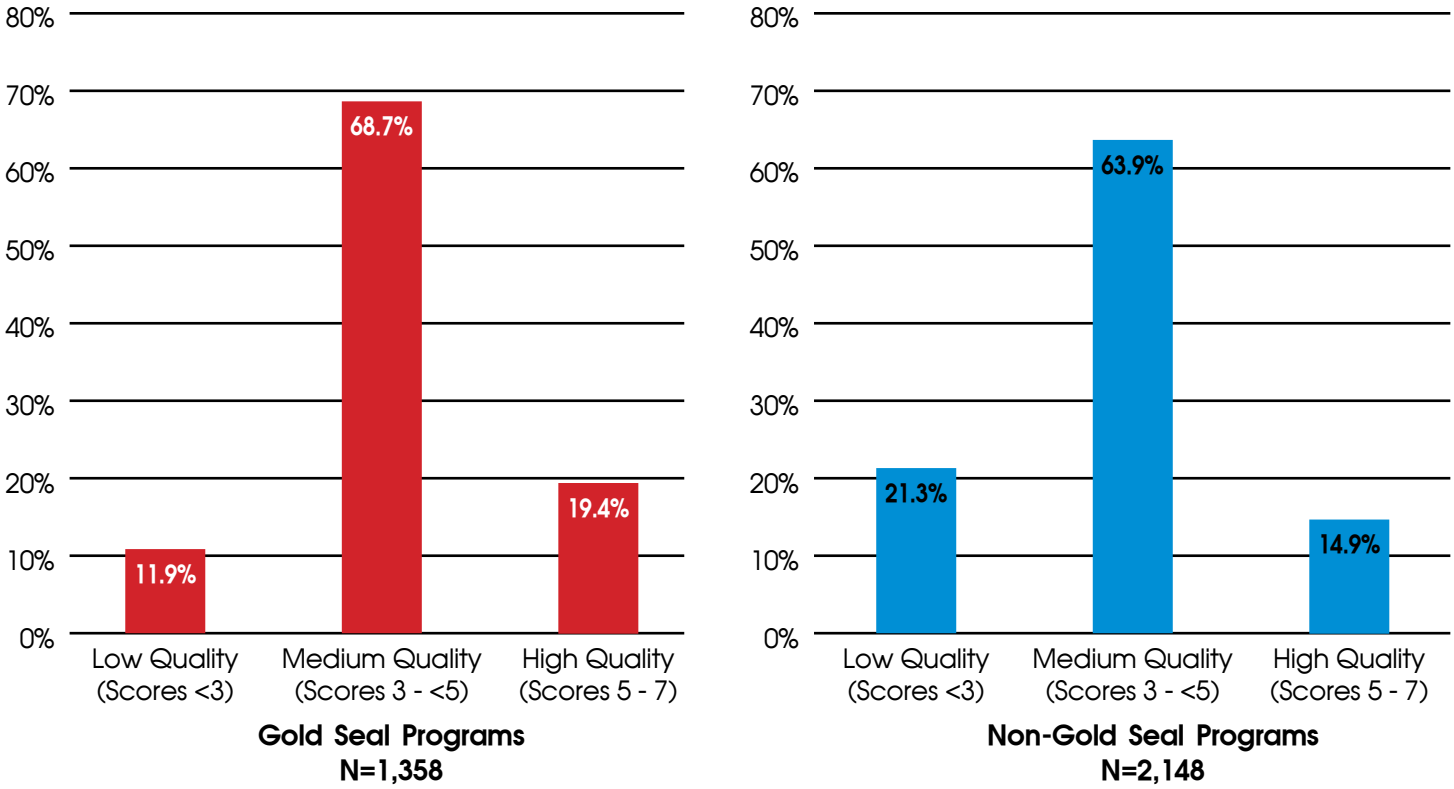
Variable	All	Gold Seal	Non-Gold Seal
ERS Overall Scores	3.96	4.14*	3.85
Subscale 1: Space/ Furnishings	3.76	3.95*	3.64
Subscale 2: Personal Care Routines	2.50	2.52	2.49
Subscale 3: Listening & Talking	4.51	4.68*	4.40
Subscale 4: Activities	4.29	4.52*	4.15
Subscale 5: Interactions	4.66	4.81*	4.57
Subscale 6: Program Structure	4.40	4.67*	4.23

**Indicates significance at the p<.05 level*

Note: Scores <3 are considered inadequate, scores of 3 - <5 are considered minimal to adequate and scores of 5 – 7 are considered good to excellent, according to ERS.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of scores cross-tabulated by ranges of inadequate (low quality), minimal to adequate (medium quality) and good to excellent (high quality) by Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal scores. As shown in Figure 1, 11.9% of Gold Seal programs scored below 3 on the ERS as compared to 21.3% of non-Gold Seal programs falling within this low quality category. Of those programs scoring in the medium score range, 68.7% were Gold Seal while 63.9% were not. For programs scoring in the high quality range representing good to excellent care, Gold Seal programs represents 19.4% as compared to non-Gold Seal programs at 14.9%.

Figure 1. Distribution of ERS Scores 2010-2012 (N=3,506)



Regression Analyses

To better understand the differences between accrediting associations, mean scores by each accrediting association were examined and regression analyses conducted to test for significance of difference between non-Gold Seal mean scores. Results show that there are 2,148 non-Gold Seal assessments in the sample with a mean overall ERS score of 3.85 and a standard deviation of 1.07 as shown in Table 4. The accrediting agencies approved under Gold Seal are reflected in the far left column. The number of assessments for each accrediting agency is shown in the next column. The mean score and standard deviation (in parenthesis) for the overall ERS and each subscale are presented in the remaining columns of Table 4. As shown in the table, the Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment (APPLE) accreditation had the highest number of assessments at 683 with National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) having the next highest at 214 and 203 respectively. Results showed that the overall mean scores of APPLE, NAC, NAEYC and United Methodist Association of Preschools (UMAP) were significantly higher reflecting higher quality care as compared to mean scores for non-Gold Seal programs.

An examination of subscales showed that while APPLE accredited programs scored significantly higher than non-Gold Seal programs overall, there were two subscales where the difference were not significant. The mean score for subscale 2 was lower for APPLE accredited programs than for non-Gold Seal programs and generally low for all accrediting associations. This particular subscale measured how well the environment supports appropriate practices for tasks such as tooth brushing, hand washing, diapering, toileting and meal time activities. This is an area of concern due to the potential health risks to which young children can be exposed in group care environments with poor practices in this area. The score for APPLE in subscale 5 was also not significantly different from non-Gold Seal programs.

Table 4. Regression Analyses of ERS Scores and Subscale Scores by Accrediting Association

	N=	ERS Total	Space & Furnishings	Personal Care Routines	Listening & Talking	Activities	Interaction	Program Structure
			Subscale 1	Subscale 2	Subscale 3	Subscale 4	Subscale 5	Subscale 6
		M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)
Non Gold Seal	2,148	3.85	3.64	2.49	4.40	4.15	4.57	4.23
		(1.0720)	(0.9507)	(0.8653)	(1.4210)	(1.3440)	(1.5440)	(1.6110)
Gold Seal Accrediting Associations	**N=**	**ERS Total**	**Space & Furnishings**	**Personal Care Routines**	**Listening & Talking**	**Activities**	**Interaction**	**Program Structure**
			Subscale 1	**Subscale 2**	**Subscale 3**	**Subscale 4**	**Subscale 5**	**Subscale 6**
		M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)
ACSI	7	3.83	3.32	2.81	4.19	3.72	5.30	4.26
		(0.4502)	(0.2153)	(0.8298)	(0.7655)	(0.4305)	(1.1530)	(1.2110)
ACTS	4	3.98	3.99	2.59	4.77	3.80	5.03	4.68
		(0.5712)	(0.8610)	(0.8340)	(1.9850)	(0.5477)	(1.5300)	(1.5330)
APPLE	683	4.10*	3.87*	2.40	4.69*	4.56*	4.63	4.68*
		(0.9125)	(0.8610)	(0.7721)	(1.2900)	(1.2980)	(1.4200)	(1.5330)
COA	15	4.33	4.09	2.42	5.02	5.20*	4.59	4.52
		(0.7538)	(1.0870)	(0.5385)	(0.7505)	(0.8835)	(1.1200)	(1.3730)
NAC	214	4.39*	4.20*	2.87*	4.81*	4.77*	5.30*	4.88*
		(0.8428)	(0.8663)	(1.0160)	(1.1430)	(1.1320)	(1.2870)	(1.4820)
NAEYC	203	4.31*	4.11*	2.48	4.94*	4.60*	5.11*	4.98*
		(.8554)	(.8752)	(.8631)	(1.2040)	(1.1060)	(1.4220)	(1.4740)
NAFCC	89	3.76	3.80	2.67*	4.11	3.83	4.36	3.97
		(1.0270)	(1.0840)	(.7806)	(1.4480)	(1.1730)	(1.6070)	(1.5320)
NCPSA	15	3.70	3.45	2.16	4.37	4.13	4.53	4.11
		(1.0550)	(.9120)	(1.2940)	(1.2770)	(1.3000)	(1.5940)	(1.7580)
NECPA	56	3.84	3.91*	2.55	4.17	4.19	4.30	4.06
		(.9271)	(.8567)	(.7785)	(1.2930)	(1.1530)	(1.6500)	(1.6060)
SACS	45	3.96	3.89	2.34	4.49	4.22	4.78	4.50
		(1.0460)	(1.0790)	(.7014)	(1.4720)	(1.4610)	(1.7140)	(1.5480)
UMAP	27	4.41*	3.99	2.92*	4.94*	4.56	5.92*	4.79
		(.6749)	(.8553)	(.9193)	(1.4830)	(.7298)	(1.0480)	(1.1640)

SD = Standard Deviation

**Indicates significance with p-value <.05*

This subscale measures how teachers are appropriately interacting with the children and how they encourage and support appropriate interactions among the children.

The next highest number of assessments was available for NAC for which mean score differences were significant on all subscales. NAEYC mean scores were significantly higher than non-Gold Seal programs on all subscales with the exception of Subscale 2: Personal Care Routines. The National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) showed a significant positive difference on Subscale 2 and was the only subscale whose difference was significant. This was likely due to the fact that there are fewer children allowed by regulation in care in family child care home settings and attending to the demands for maintaining healthy and sanitary practices may be enhanced with a lower staff to child ratio.

The National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA) programs scored significantly higher on Subscale 1: Space and Furnishings with a total of 56 assessments. UMAP mean scores were significantly higher on three of the six subscales. Caution is taken in interpreting these results as the number of cases for UMAP was small (n=27). Overall from this analysis, there were four accrediting associations whose programs scored significantly better than non-Gold Seal programs and account for the overall differences observed between Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal programs. Three of the four associations also represented the highest number of assessments.

Table 5. ERS Types by Gold Seal Status

Type	Infant-Toddler ITERS-R		Preschool ECERS-R		Family Child Care Homes FCCERS-R	
Status	**(n)**	**Mean**	**(n)**	**Mean**	**(n)**	**Mean**
GS	738	3.84*	801	4.36*	89	3.76
Non-GS	468	3.46	1,162	4.10	248	3.80

*Indicates significance at the p<.05 level

The type of ERS assessment was determined by the setting and/or age group of the children. To understand if Gold Seal programs outperform non-Gold Seal programs in different settings, the mean scores were cross-tabulated by type and compared by Gold Seal status as shown in Table 5. There were 738 assessments on the ITERS-R in Gold Seal programs and 468 in non-Gold Seal programs. Examining the results for the ITERS-R measuring the quality in infant-toddler classrooms, Gold Seal program scores were higher than non-Gold Seal at 3.84. Results of T-tests show that the mean differences are significant for Gold Seal as indicated in bold with a p-value <.05.

The ECERS-R measured quality in preschool classrooms. There were 801 assessments in Gold Seal classrooms and 1,162 in non-Gold Seal classrooms. The results showed that the scores were higher in Gold Seal as compared to non-Gold Seal at 4.36 and 4.10 respectively and the differences were significant.

Examining the results on the FCCERS-R that measures quality in family child care homes showed that there were 89 Gold Seal settings and 248 non-Gold Seal settings. The overall mean scores were not significantly different for Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal programs. Moreover, there was a negative association for Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal scores at 3.76 and 3.80 respectively. This is an area that deserves attention to understand why Gold Seal does not impact quality as measured by the FCCERS-R.

In summary, the statistical analyses using the descriptive data and the regression results showed that the mean scores of Gold Seal programs were higher than non-Gold Seal programs. The t-statistic suggested that the differences were significant. The ERS types were examined to determine if the assessment instrument mattered in predicting overall results. Based on the findings, scores in preschool classrooms will likely be higher than scores in family child care homes or infant/toddler classrooms. Considering the vulnerable nature of infants and toddlers as well as children served in family child care home settings, this is a notable finding.

Examining the scores qualitatively by their ranges helps to better situate the findings in the literature. Most of the programs in this study provided a level of quality that is considered to be only minimally adequate with Gold Seal programs at 68.7% and non-Gold Seal programs at 63.9%. More concerning was that programs providing a level of quality characterized as poor and potentially harmful for children included 11.9% of Gold Seal and 21.3% of non-Gold Seal programs. Those scoring in the high quality range were comprised of Gold Seal at 19.4% and non-Gold Seal at 14.9%. These scores reflected programs that provided a level of quality that were good to excellent and assumed to contribute positively to children's healthy growth and development.

The scores by each accrediting association were examined to determine overall means and significant differences. The associations were also regressed against ERS scores as the outcome variable to determine whether there are any differences among the accrediting associations in predicting higher scores on the ERS. Four accrediting associations were related to programs showing significantly higher ERS scores than non-Gold Seal programs: NAC, NAEYC, APPLE, and UMAP. The largest numbers of assessments are represented by APPLE, NAC and NAEYC, respectively. UMAP represents a smaller number of assessments at 27 and caution should be taken in interpreting these results.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the success of the Gold Seal Quality Care Program in meeting the policy goals of improving the quality and availability of child care services for children of low-income families in Florida. The infusion of public funds into the child care economic sector is expected to serve as an incentive for private business adherence to higher standards leading to better child outcomes. The state's economic interests are served through the provision of child care so that parents receiving public assistance can be employed; thereby reducing long-term welfare dependence. The state's educational interests are served by the expected benefits from higher quality child care resulting in improved school readiness for vulnerable children. Program participation is voluntary for child care businesses that wish to participate in the Office of Early Learning school readiness child care subsidy program. Participation in the state's Voluntary Pre-kindergarten Program as a provider of Pre-K is contingent upon evidence that the program holds a Gold Seal certificate or is accredited by one of eight accrediting associations referenced in the VPK statute for license-exempt providers.

Do child care programs that possess a Gold Seal Quality Care certificate demonstrate better scores on observed quality as measured by the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) than non-Gold Seal programs?

According to the statistical analyses, Gold Seal programs scored higher on quality as measured by the ERS compared to programs that are non-Gold Seal and that difference was statistically significant. The mean scores of Gold Seal programs (M = 4.14, SD = .91635) was higher than the mean scores of non-Gold Seal programs (M = 3.85, SD = 1.01722). The magnitude was less than a third of a point overall. The subscales were examined to determine variations. No significant difference between Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal programs on the Personal Care Routines subscale. This subscale assesses the way that adults and children handle routines such as greeting/departing, meals, snacks, napping, diapering, toileting, and health and safety practices. Findings for this subscale are worthy of consideration due to the high risk of contagion of communicable diseases in group settings with young children and they are low consistently across all programs. Children who are frequently sick cannot participate fully in the daily program which hampers their ability to derive maximum benefits from preschool experiences. In addition to the physical challenges this poses for children, parents are also forced to find other child care arrangements or miss work which can cause family stress.

Gold Seal programs scored highest on Subscale 5 measuring interactions with a mean score of 4.81 which was also statistically higher than the mean score of non-Gold Seal programs. This is an important subscale to examine as well since it reflects the way that teachers discipline children, how teachers interact and use language to engage children and scaffold their learning, how children interact with one another, and how teachers supervise children throughout the day. It is also important to note that a criticism of the ERS as an assessment tool is that it assesses the overall physical environment and does not capture interactions in the classroom. Experts suggest that interactions between the teacher and child are the most significant factor in promoting positive outcomes.

The type of assessment was also examined to determine if settings where the assessment took place mattered. The ITERS-R measures the quality of infant-toddler classrooms for children from birth to 2 ½ years. The ECERS-R measures the quality of preschool classrooms for children from 2 ½ to five years. The FCCERS-R measures the quality of care in family child care homes where the ages of the children are mixed. The overall mean scores for assessments completed in infant-toddler classrooms were the lowest at 3.61; preschool classrooms the highest at 4.21, and family child care homes were in between at 3.79.

While Gold Seal status was statistically significant overall, this was not true for family child care homes that care for children from birth through school-age. There was a negative association for family child care homes that held a Gold Seal as compared to those that did not at 3.76 and 3.80 respectively though these results were not statistically significant. This finding suggests that the NAFCC accreditation may not be aligned with quality measures for family child care homes.

The t-statistic indicated significant differences between Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal programs for infants and toddlers classrooms; however, the mean scores for infant-toddler classrooms were the lowest of the three settings and only slightly above minimally adequate at 3.61 for Gold Seal programs. These findings warrant a more intense focus on quality

improvements in infant-toddler classrooms and family child care homes considering the importance of the first three years of life in building the foundations for later success. While these results show that there are differences, they are not intended to infer causality.

Finally, it is important to understand the meaning of the ERS scores within the broader context of quality. The authors of ERS broadly interpret the scores as follows: 1 = inadequate, 3 = adequate, 5 = good and 7 = excellent. A child care setting meeting the definition of developmentally appropriate care put forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) would be expected to score in the range of 5 or higher. While Gold Seal programs score higher with a mean of 4.14 as compared to non-Gold Seal programs with a mean of 3.85, the differences are modest with less than a third of a point difference. To situate this study's findings in the literature, the Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study (1995) conducted assessments of early childhood classrooms using the ERS in 401 centers in four states and two observations per center for a total of 802 assessments. There was a broad range of quality scores, with more than 11% scoring below 3 (inadequate) and nearly one quarter scoring above 5 (good to excellent).

The results of this study showed that Gold Seal programs were scoring in a range similar to the Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study (1995) after 16 years of intervention. Non-Gold Seal programs scored even lower, and the differences were modest with less than a third of a point difference in mean scores overall. In spite of efforts to impact quality, there is much room for improvement in providing the quality of care that contributes to children's healthy growth, development, school readiness and positive outcomes in school and life.

Are there signigicant differences in observed quality between programs accredited by the different accrediting associations as measured by scores on the ERS?

There are currently 11 accrediting associations approved for Gold Seal program participation. Programs that apply for inclusion must have standards that substantially meet or exceed the accreditation standards adopted and published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Association of Family Child Care Homes (NAFCC) or the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA) according to Florida Statutes. It is important to note that NAFCC is the only accrediting association for family child care homes; therefore, FCCERS-R scores are specific to NAFCC accreditation only.

An analysis of the overall and subscale mean scores presented in Table 3 showed that there were differences among the accrediting associations. The highest overall mean score at 4.41 was obtained by programs accredited through UMAP and was significantly higher than the overall mean score for non-Gold Seal programs; however, caution is taken in interpreting these results since only 27 assessments occurred in UMAP classrooms. There were three other accrediting associations with significant overall mean scores to include NAC, NAEYC and APPLE. An analysis of subscale scores showed showed significant differences in mean scores for NAC on all subscales; NAEYC on all subscales with the exception of Subscale 1: Space and Furnishings and APPLE on all subscales with the exception of Subscale 5: Interactions. There was more than three times the number of observations in APPLE accredited programs as compared with NAC or NAEYC.

The regression results showed a positive association for NAC and NAEYC with coefficients of .546 and .461 respectively. The coefficients for APPLE and UMAP were not as strong at .251 and .107 respectively. NAC consistently showed strong positive associations on all subscales as did NAEYC with the exception of Subscale 2: Personal Care Routines where there is a negative association coefficient at -.010. Both NAC and NAEYC accreditations were strong predictors of observable quality along with APPLE and UMAP to a lesser degree. Interestingly, NAFCC predicted higher scores on three of the six subscales (though not on the overall scores which showed a negative association). While there were differences, they were relatively small.

There are three accrediting associations specifically named in the Gold Seal Quality Care program statute; NAEYC, NECPA and NAFCC. The remaining eight associations must substantially meet or exceed the standards of these three national accrediting associations. Of the three associations named in statute, results from the regression analyses show that only NAEYC is positively associated with higher scores on the ERS. Moreover, the regression results suggest a negative association for programs accredited by NECPA and NAFCC, which is the sole accrediting association for family child care homes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The conceptual model for this study is based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1979) with the developing teacher at the nucleus of the design. The teacher is arguably the most important determinant of quality in the early childhood classroom or family child care home (Bowman, Donovan & Burns, 2001). Efforts to impact the structural and process indicators of quality through the Gold Seal policy are limited without careful consideration of the ECE workforce. A study of the ECE workforce in Florida (Children's Forum, 2013) shows that wages are low with a median annual wage of $19,140 for teachers. Only 33% report the availability of benefits such as health insurance. The education of the field is relatively low with the majority of workers possessing a high school diploma, though about 25% hold a staff credential that requires specialized training beyond high school in child development and early childhood education. Turnover is relatively high and 60% of the programs reported at least one staff member leaving during the previous year. Turnover reported in child care settings is approximately four times greater than turnover reported in K-12 settings (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2009). Recognizing the important role of the teacher in controlling classroom quality and impacting child outcomes is central to the discussion.

> Turnover reported in child care settings is approximately four times greater than turnover reported in K-12 settings.

Implications for the State of Florida

The State of Florida has invested substantial resources to improve the quality of child care and early childhood programs through the Gold Seal program. Approximately $33 million is expended annually to supplement daily rates paid to Gold Seal providers for the care and education of children funded by the early learning coalitions. These children may be served in a variety of provider types to include Head Start/Early Head Start programs, faith-based settings, private and public school programs. Local county governments abate property taxes for proprietary Gold Seal facilities representing a significant investment of local tax revenues as an incentive for participation. Four of the 11 approved accrediting associations demonstrate better quality than non-Gold Seal programs as measured by the ERS but the differences are small. Approximately 12% of the providers earning an enhanced rate were deemed by their evaluators as providing poor quality that could be potentially harmful for children and the majority of care was considered minimal to be of minimally adequate quality, also characterized as custodial care. Programs providing growth enhancing activities with developmentally-appropriate curricula contributing to overall school readiness were represented by approximately 19% of Gold Seal programs and 15% of non-Gold Seal programs. The differences between Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal programs were relatively small. Overall scores indicate that intervention on behalf of child care quality is indeed warranted and necessary.

In light of the findings in this investigation, the state of Florida should consider policies that prevent programs that fail to offer an established level of quality from participating in the school readiness program. Children funded through school readiness are vulnerable and have the most to gain from high quality early childhood experiences. Vulnerable children attending poor quality programs are further subjected to experiences that can impede their overall development and well-being, school readiness and ultimately, their later academic success.

A Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) is a relatively new policy lever introduced first in 2004 first in Palm Beach County. Five of the 11 counties in this study operate a QRIS including Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Sarasota and Hillsborough. All of the participating counties initiated their QRIS between the years 2004 – 2009. The basic components of a QRIS (program standards, accountability measures, practitioner outreach and support, financial incentives and parent/consumer education) are in place. However, there are no statewide standards so each county determines their standards and the financial incentive awards based on the resources available to implement the system. The state might consider re-directing funds from programs providing less than acceptable levels of quality, particularly after repeated opportunities to improve, to offset a portion of the costs in developing a statewide system.

Consideration might be given to the entrance criteria and number of accrediting associations participating in the program and their relative effectiveness in producing better quality environments for children given the correlation between quality and child outcomes. The accrediting associations cited in statute as exemplary models by which other accrediting associations are measured might be re-examined since only NAEYC was shown to be correlated with higher quality. While this study does not infer causality, the state might consider policies that hold accrediting associations to standards of accountability for participating in Gold Seal. Moreover, a policy regarding the consistency in quality assurance practices across accrediting associations participating in the Gold Seal program might be considered to strengthen the program.

Efforts to improve early childhood programs are challenged when salaries are low and turnover is high while recognizing the pivotal role of the teacher in determining quality. The state might consider more direct approaches for targeted policy interventions and look to other states such as Georgia that requires parity in salaries paid to preschool teachers who teach in the state-funded prekindergarten program with those teaching in public schools. Counties in Florida that have implemented the Child Care WAGE$® Florida program that provides semi-annual stipends directly to teachers based on levels of education, retention with their employer and continued educational progress show promising results. Teacher turnover is reduced and teachers are pursuing higher education as compared to teachers who do not participate in the WAGE$ program (Children's Forum, 2012).

Implications for Accrediting Associations

Accrediting associations might use these results to examine their standards and practices and determine how programs accredited by their association score on the overall ERS as well as each of the subscales. These findings can provide an excellent opportunity to reflect on both the current policies and practices to determine if changes are warranted.

Many of the accrediting associations provide preparatory materials in advance to help early childhood programs evaluate their own practices in prescribed areas. These findings provide data that can help associations strengthen their training and technical assistance strategies to help programs make improvements.

Finally, most accrediting associations are membership-based and are accountable to their members to ensure that their accreditation process meets high standards of practice. Reporting results can inform the membership on how this study reflects on their accreditation process and provides an impetus to make improvements as warranted or to publicize rankings among the field of Gold Seal accrediting associations.

Implications for Early Learning Coalitions

Early Learning Coalitions are challenged to manage multiple priorities and ensure that children and families receive high quality services that lead to positive outcomes. Moreover, they are ultimately held responsible for the readiness of the children served in their respective areas. These results can support Coalition efforts to limit Gold Seal enhanced funding to programs providing poor quality to prevent potential detrimental outcomes for children.

Some view the ERS as duplicative since child care licensing and regulation visits regulated programs and licenses for compliance with basic health and safety standards, although standards, validity, reliability and measures differ. To address this criticism, the state has supported the use of the Classroom Assessment Scoring SystemTM (CLASSTM) to better measure the quality that children experience. However, as this assessment is relatively new in Florida, no minimum levels or thresholds have been defined. Early Learning Coalitions can use these results to advocate for policies that support improved quality and defining levels of quality that are minimally acceptable for participation in school readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten programs. These results can also be used to educate Early Learning Coalition boards of directors and community partners on the status of quality and setting goals for improvement.

Implications for Early Childhood Programs (Centers and Homes)

Florida's school readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten services are provided primarily in the private market. As private businesses, they are challenged to meet the demands of families, regulators, communities, and external funders while striving to deliver on the promise of quality and good child outcomes. Child care businesses typically operate on a low profit margin and rely on enhanced rates paid for school readiness to meet financial obligations. While results might initially be threatening if financial resources are redirected to other quality initiatives, results can be used to support enhanced rates for programs that do provide the level of quality that should be rewarded and recognized.

The results of the Gold Seal study can also provide an opportunity for child care and early learning programs to self-evaluate and use the results to improve practices benefitting young children. Individual programs that are assessed using the ERS can be provided with feedback, training, and technical assistance to improve practices and scores on subsequent assessments. Additionally, Gold Seal programs can evaluate their accrediting association to determine how they fared in the overall comparison of mean scores and where changes might be considered.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Understanding the impact of quality indicators in early childhood settings, particularly for children most at risk of educational failure, is paramount. Studies that examine the impact of quality environments on child outcomes are needed to better understand the most effective systemic drivers to impact and inform public policy. Studies that examine specific structural indicators of quality such as teacher characteristics within the context of Gold Seal programs are important to better understand how specific variables might be manipulated to produce the best outcomes for children.

Better data systems are needed to track and collect information on data points such as program characteristics (e.g., Gold Seal and QRIS status, size of program, population served, poverty census tracks), child data (socioeconomic status, demographic information, and language proficiency), teacher characteristics (demographic information, training and education, and language proficiency), workplace supports (e.g., personnel policies, environment, salary and wages, professional development opportunities and collegiality among co-workers) and child outcomes (linking K-12 academic progress). Access to these data across systems provides a rich resource for future studies examining the multiple characteristics contributing to quality environments for children and impacts on child outcomes.

Understanding how to impact the decisions of the consumer are central in creating policies that encourage parents to select higher quality programs.

Since the state relies on accreditation associations to serve as a proxy for quality, an evaluation of accreditation practices (in addition to the standards) of each of the associations might be considered to determine how these practices differ and why the outcomes vary. For example, some accreditation associations require an onsite review of each classroom to validate compliance with published accreditation standards while others require only an attestation of compliance by the program staff without an onsite review. Each of the accrediting associations found to be significant predictors of higher ERS scores conduct onsite visits of each classroom as a requirement for accreditation review. Research on how child care providers choose an accrediting association is also needed to better understand the factors that drive choice (for example, some accreditations may be perceived as easier or less costly).

Since the selection of a VPK program or child care center relies on parent choice, research is also needed on the tools that parents use to make choices and whether Gold Seal and accreditation play a role in decision-making. Understanding how to impact the decisions of the consumer are central in creating policies that encourage parents to select higher quality programs.

Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS), a policy lever to improve overall quality, needs to be better understood. As a relatively new system driver, the financial investments made in that system should be captured in the counties where QRIS is available to better determine its overall effects. Inasmuch as QRIS is not available statewide, quantifying local investments and results will begin to deepen our understanding about the specific components that contribute to quality and ultimately lead to improved child outcomes. Finally, since this study demonstrates differences in Gold Seal and non-Gold Seal but does not infer causality, an experimental study to understand both QRIS and Gold Seal as policy levers would make a significant contribution to the literature and policy development in Florida.

REFERENCES

Bowman, B. (Ed.), Donovan, M.S. (Ed.), Burns, M.S. (Ed), (2000). *Eager to learn: Educating our preschoolers.* National Academics Press.

Bredekamp, S., & Copple, C. (Eds.) (1997). Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs (Rev. ed.). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (2009). Comparison of K-12 and early education systems: A policy brief. Retrieved on February 20, 2013 from: *http://www.irle.berkeley.edu/cscce/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/ComparisonandK-12Webversion.pdf*

Children's Forum (2012). Child Care WAGE$ Florida. Annual report presented to the board of directors, December 2012.

Children's Forum (2013). Statewide early care and education workforce study: A research report for the Early Care and Education State Advisory Council, Office of Early Learning, Tallahassee, FL.

Clifford, R., Reszka, S. & Rossbach, H. (2010). Reliability and validity of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale: A working paper. Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, Chapel Hill, N.C. Retrieved on August 5, 2012 from *http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/sites/ers.fpg.unc.edu/files/ReliabilityEcers.pdf*

Cost, Quality & Child Outcomes Study Team (1995). *Cost, quality, and child outcomes in child care centers: Public report,* 2nd ed. Denver, CO: Economics Department, University of Colorado at Denver.

Harms, T., Cryer, D., & Clifford, R. M. (2003). Infant/toddler environment rating scale: Revised edition. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Harms, T., Clifford, R. M., & Cryer, D. (1998). Early childhood environment rating scale: Revised edition. New York: Teachers College Press.

Harms, T., Cryer, D., & Clifford, R. M. (2007). Family child care environment rating scale: Revised edition. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Ramey, C. & Campbell, F. (1991). Poverty, early childhood education, and academic competence: The Abecedarian experiment. In A. Huston (Ed.), *Children reared in poverty* (pp. 190-221). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Reynolds, A. (1991). Early schooling of children at risk. *American Educational Research Journal*, (28) 392-422.

Schweinhart, L., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W. S., Belfield, C., & Nores, M. (2005). *Lifetime effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool study through age 40.* (Monographs of the HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 14). Ypsilanti, MI: HighScope Press.

Whitebook, M. (1989). Who cares? Child care teachers and the quality of care in America. Final report, National Child Care Staffing Study. Berkeley, CA: Child Care Employee Project.

Zill, N., & Resnick, G. (1998). Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES). Westat for Head Start National Study.

APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL RATING SCALES

Instrument: ***Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, Revised Edition (ITERS-R)***
Authors: Thelma Harms, Debby Cryer, Richard M. Clifford
Publisher: Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027
Copyright: 2003

Summary: The purpose of the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, Revised Edition (ITERS-R) is to assess the quality of environments in group care settings. The ITERS-R draws from three sources: research evidence from health, development and education, professional views of best practice and the practical constraints of child care settings. The requirements are based on what is believed to be important conditions to achieve positive child outcomes for children in care. The instrument includes a section on the process for determining reliability and validity and the studies surrounding those processes.

The ITERS-R includes seven subscales and 39 items. Each of the subscales is scored and the total score is calculated based on the overall average of the subscales. The seven major areas and subscales are: Space and Furnishings (indoor space, furniture for routine care and play, provision for relaxation and comfort, room arrangement, display for children); Personal Care Routines (greeting/departing, meals/snacks, nap, diapering/toileting, health practices, safety practices); Listening and Talking (helping children understand language, helping children use language, using books; Activities (fine motor, active physical play, art, music and movement, blocks, dramatic play, sand and water play, nature/science, use of TV, video, and/or computer, promoting acceptance of diversity); Interaction (supervision of play and learning, peer interaction, staff-child interaction, discipline); Program Structure (schedule, free play, group play activities, provisions for children with disabilities); Parents and Staff (provisions for parents, provisions for personal needs of staff, provisions for professional needs of staff, staff interaction and cooperation, staff continuity, supervision and evaluation of staff and opportunities for professional growth.

Instrument: ***Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised Edition (ECERS-R)***
Authors: Thelma Harms, Richard M. Clifford, Debby Cryer
Publisher: Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027
Copyright: 2005

Summary: The purpose of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R) is to assess the quality of environments serving preschool children in group settings. There have been several research projects in the United States and abroad that used the ECERS-R to assess global quality. Several studies have linked ECERS scores and child outcomes measures as well as ECERS scores and teacher characteristics and behaviors. Again, the instrument includes a section on the processes undertaken for determining reliability and validity of the instrument and the subsequent revisions to the tool.

The ECERS-R is divided into seven subscales and 43 items as follows: Space and Furnishings (indoor space, furniture for routine care, play and learning, furnishings for relaxation and comfort, room arrangement for play, space for privacy, child-related display, space for gross motor play, gross motor equipment); Personal Care Routines (greeting/departing, meals/snacks, nap/rest, toileting/diapering, health practices, safety practices; Language-Reasoning (books and pictures, encouraging children to communicate, using language to develop reasoning skills, informal use of language; Activities (fine motor, art, music/movement, blocks, sand/water, dramatic play, nature/science, math/number, use of TV, video and/or computers, promoting acceptance of diversity; Interaction (supervision of gross motor activities, general supervision of children (other than gross motor), discipline, staff-child interaction, interactions among children; Program Structure (schedule, free play, group time, provisions for children with disabilities); and Parents and Staff (provisions for parents, provisions for personal nee3ds of staff, provisions for professional needs of staff, staff interaction and cooperation, supervision and evaluation of staff, and opportunities for professional growth).

Instrument: ***Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale, Revised Edition (FCCERS-R)***
Authors: Thelma Harms, Debby Cryer and Richard M. Clifford
Publisher: Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027
Copyright: 2007

Summary: The purpose of the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale Revised (FCCERS-R) is to assess the quality of environments for young children served in family child care homes. Family child care is a type of care where children of various ages are cared for by one and sometimes more than one adult depending on the requirements for licensing and regulation in states. It is different than center-based care in that care takes place in a home and the ages of children often vary. Consistent with the other scales referenced, the FCCERS-R draws on the research literature from health, development and education, professional views of best practice and practical constraints of real life in a family child care setting. A section in the tool is also devoted to validity and reliability studies that demonstrate the rigorous review and integration into the final assessment instrument.

The FCCERS-R is divided into seven subscales and 38 items as follows: Space and Furnishings (indoor space used for child care, furniture for routine care, play and learning, provision for relaxation and comfort, arrangement of indoor space for child care, display for children, space for privacy); Personal Care Routines (greeting/departing, nap/rest, meals/snacks, diapering/toileting, health practices, safety practices); Listening and Talking (helping children understand language, helping children use language, using books); Activities (fine motor, art, music and movement, blocks, dramatic play, math/number, nature/science, sand and water play, promoting acceptance of diversity, use of TV, video and/or computer, active physical play); Interaction (supervision of play and learning, provider-child interaction, discipline, interactions among children); Program Structure (schedule, free play, group time, provisions for children with disabilities); Parents and Provider (provisions for parents, balancing personal and caregiving responsibilities, opportunities for professional growth and provisions for professional needs).

Administration of the ERS

Assessors are trained in the use of the ERS by the authors of the scales or by experienced trainers who have demonstrated ongoing reliability with the authors of the scales. The authors recommend that reliability be established and re-established on a periodic basis. Reliability must be demonstrated at a level of 85% or higher after every 6 to 10 assessments or, for "highly reliable assessors" (those demonstrating reliability of 90% or above for at least 6 months, after every 15 to 20 assessments). The scores of ERS assessments used in the study have been submitted by reliable assessors.

APPENDIX B: FLORIDA APPROVED GOLD SEAL ACCREDITING ASSOCIATIONS

September, 2012

Abbr.	Name	Contact Name & Address	Approval Date	Expiration Date	Renewal Date
ACSI	Association of Christian Schools International	Patrick Mennengae 461 Plaza Drive, Suite 3 Dunedin, FL 34698 Pat_mennenga@acsi.org	10/31/11	10/31/16	4/30/16
ACTS	Association of Christian Teachers and Schools	Ike Stokes 1445 Boonville Avenue Springfield, MO 65802 istokes@actsschools.org	10/31/11	10/31/16	4/30/16
APPLE	Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment	Diana Layton 10060 Amberwood Rd, Suite 3 Fort Myers, FL 33913 Diana.layton@faccm.org	1/31/09	1/31/14	7/30/13
COA	Council on Accreditation	Joseph Seoane 120 Wall Street, 11th Floor New York, NY 10005 jseoane@coanet.org	7/31/09	7/31/14	1/31/14
NAC	National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs	Colleen Tracy Haddad 8000 Centre Park Drive, Suite 1700 Austin, Texas colleen@naccp.org	3/31/10	7/31/14	1/31/14
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children	Linda Anderson 1509 16th Street, NW Washington, DC 20036-1426 landerson@naeyc.org	N/A*	N/A	N/A
NAFCC	National Association of Family Child Care	Dawn Cramer 1743 Alexander Street Salt Lake City, UT 84119 dcramer@nafcc-mail.org	N/A*	N/A	N/A
NCPSA	National Council for Private School Accreditation	Dr. Don D. Petry P.O. Box 13686 Seattle, WA 98198-1010 drdpetry@aol.com	12/31/09	12/31/14	6/30/14

Abbr.	Name	Contact Name & Address	Approval Date	Expiration Date	Renewal Date
NECPA	National Early Childhood Program Accreditation	Kristen Grimm 1150 Hungryneck Blvd, Suite. C305 Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464 kgrimm@necpa.net	N/A*	N/A	N/A
SACS	AdvancED SACS of Florida	Pat Wentz University of West FL Building 78, Room 117B 11000 University Parkway Pensacola, FL 32514 pwentz@uwf.edu	2/28/07	2/28/13	Pending
UMAP	United Methodist Association of Preschools	Sandi Vaughn 4234 Settlers Court St. Cloud, FL 34772 Sandan_vl@hotmail.com	11/30/09	11/30/14	5/31/14

**Accrediting associations specifically referenced in Gold Seal Florida Statutes 402.281(2) are not subject to approval, expiration or renewal.*

APPENDIX C: LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Tables

Figures

2807 Remington Green Circle
Tallahassee, FL 32308

(850) 681-7002 • www.thechildrensforum.com