Quality Early Learning in Georgia

Quality early care and learning is essential to the growth and development of Georgia’s youngest learners. Multiple studies have shown how quality impacts outcomes for young children in their early years and well beyond.

**WHAT IS QUALITY?**

Although the elements of quality early care will vary by age, quality early learning should:

- Employ qualified teachers
- Have low child-teacher ratios
- Implement individualized instruction
- Ensure a clean and safe environment
- Promote proper physical, social, and emotional development
- Engage and support families
- Provide supports for dual-language learners
- Support academic growth particularly in language and literacy
- Implement supports for dual-language learners
- Promote proper physical, social, and emotional development
- Provide supports for dual-language learners

**QUALITY INITIATIVES IN GEORGIA**

**Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS)**

GELDS are Georgia’s high-quality, research-based early learning standards created by Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) for children ranging from birth to age five.

The standards define the desired content and outcomes for early learning that are aligned with K-12 standards. The standards support children’s individual rates of development, approaches to learning, and cultural contexts.

The standards are organized into five domains of learning with corresponding standards and age-specific indicators. The five domains of learning are:

1. Physical Development and Motor Skills
2. Social and Emotional Development
3. Approaches to Play and Learning
4. Communication, Language and Literacy
5. Cognitive Development and General Knowledge

**Early Education Empowerment Zones (E³Zs)**

In 2014, DECAL established four E³Zs in regions of the state with large populations of underserved young children with high needs.

- **North:** Catoosa, Whitfield, Murray, Gordon and Gilmer counties
- **East:** Clarke County
- **Central:** Bibb County
- **South:** Colquitt, Cook, Brooks, Lowndes and Echols counties

Georgia invested in early education empowerment zones (E³Zs) by providing increased childcare subsidies, voluntary center-based home visiting services, health screenings, assessments and referrals, additional professional development for educators, and support to get 100% of programs quality rated.

This three-year pilot was federally funded as a part of the Early Learning Race to the Top grant and successfully improved the quality of education through targeted services. The four selected regions serve as models for other communities across the state. After a tremendous impact, the state is now continuing the investment through Early Education Community Partnership Regions, which will serve the four E³Zs and scales the support across any community desiring to improve outcomes for young children in Georgia.

[www.georgiavoices.org](http://www.georgiavoices.org)
Quality Rated is a voluntary quality rating and improvement system for early and school-age care programs administered by DECAL. Quality Rated is meant to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality of a child care program.

To become Quality Rated, programs must submit a portfolio with self-reported information and receive a site visit by independent experts. Based on their star rating, programs receive a tiered reimbursement package that includes training, materials, and equipment or financial bonuses.

Quality Rated is a three-star rating system that awards programs a star rating based on standards.

Benefits for Parents and Families

Quality Rated helps parents and families find high-quality child care so they can make the most informed choice for their child.

Parents can use the FREE, online tool to access information about specific programming including safety and inspection reports, teacher credentials, and ages served. To find Quality Rated programs in your area, visit www.QualityRated.org.

Benefits to Georgia

Regardless of their rating, all programs that participate are committed to improving the quality of their program by going above and beyond Georgia's licensing standards. At a community and state level, Quality Rated creates a shared understanding of quality learning and a commitment to achieving it. By 2020, all childcare centers receiving child care subsidies (CAPS) must be quality rated.

Of the approximately 5,000 state licensed and monitored child care programs, more than 3,500 are Quality Rated.

Sources: https://tinyurl.com/QualityLearning2019  
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