The Influence of Georgia's Quality Rated System on School Readiness in Preschool Children

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ABSTRACT

Background: Georgia rates the quality of early childcare learning centers using a tiered quality improvement system. Georgia's Quality Rated system (QR) designates a star level, (one star, two stars or three stars) to each center based on a portfolio of QR standards and an onsite assessment by Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL).
Methods: The Bracken School Readiness Assessment-3rd Edition (BSRA-3) was administered to children in various one-star (N=2), two-star(N=4) and three-star (N=6) childcare learning centers in Georgia.
Results: Significant differences were found in school readiness scores based on quality rating with two and three star centers scoring higher than one star centers.
Conclusions: Higher levels of quality in QR childcare centers displayed more school readiness than centers with lower levels of quality. Future studies should examine differences in higher quality centers to further

BACKGROUND

- Variability in standards set by providers influence the quality of childcare from one setting to the next.
- The quality of an early learning environment influences children's self-regulation abilities, long-term academic success, emotional development and physical health.
- Quality Rated (QR) is the system Georgia developed to rank the quality of childcare centers and licensed homes by assigning stars to the respective levels of quality.
- Childcare centers applying for QR status first submit a portfolio documenting how their practices align with QR standards centered on staff qualifications; child health, nutrition and physical activity; family engagement; holistic curricula and teacher-to-student ratios.
- Additionally, an assessment of the center is performed by Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale–Revised (ECERS-R).
- Scores on the portfolio and ECERS-R are combined to create a star rating.
  - Centers implementing a few QR standards with average ECERS-R scores receive a one-star rating.
  - Centers implementing multiple QR standards with above average ECERS-R scores receive a two-star rating.
  - Centers implementing the most QR standards with ECERS-R scores well above average receive a three- star rating.

Quality Rated Childcare Learning Centers in Georgia as of July 21, 2015	
One Star	138
Two Star	225
Three Star	78
Total Programs	441

BACKGROUND

School Readiness
- Early childcare is essential to school readiness, which indicates a child's preparedness to begin a formal curriculum based educational program.
- Alongside quality, the health of a child impacts school readiness and children with better physical and emotional health perform better in school.

METHODS

Participants
- 12 Quality Rated childcare learning centers in Georgia. One-star (N=2), 2-star (N=4) and 3-star (N=6).
- Age : $M = 4.16$ years ($SD = 0.78$)
- 137 males and 121 females

Children per Quality Rated Childcare Center	
One Star	27
Two Star	109
Three Star	122
Total Children	258

Materials
- School readiness was measured using The Bracken School Readiness Assessment-3rd Edition (BSRA-3) which is a reliable and valid standardized assessment.
- The BSRA-3 consists of 85 items measuring a child's knowledge of academic domains such as recognition of colors, numbers and letters, counting ability, standard and geometric shapes, and the ability to compare and contrast items.

Procedure
- Children's height and weight were recorded.
- Children completed a brief two step color blindness screen. Children who did not pass the color blindness screen were not administered the color subtest of BSRA-3.
- BSRA-3 was individually administered in a quiet testing environment.

RESULTS

- The relationship between Quality Rated star level and school readiness outcomes was analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the alpha level set at .05.
- QR star level significantly influenced school readiness, ($F (2, 255) = 3.66, p = .027$).
- Children in childcare centers at the one-star level ($M = 95.00, SD = 16.80$) performed lower than children in childcare centers at the two-star level ($M = 103.67, SD = 16.55$) and three-star level ($M = 100.42, SD = 14.35$).
- Multiple comparison tests did not reveal differences between two star and three star level centers.

School Readiness — BSRA-3 Composite by Quality Rated Star Level (One-Star, Two-Stars, Three-Stars)

CONCLUSION

- Overall, level of quality influenced school readiness outcomes when distinguishing between lower and higher levels of quality.
- Limitations include the number and distribution of childcare learning centers, however the data collection phase is ongoing.
- Future studies should investigate cumulative effects of Quality Rated standards on school readiness to further identify how the factors may prepare children academically. Additional data is also needed to further examine differences among higher quality centers.