

Adopt a Quality Rating and Improvement System

High-quality early childhood programs have been shown to generate significant economic benefits for their ability to increase school success, reduce crime rates and increase future wages and stability for children who attend such programs. But not all programs produce these results because not all programs provide quality care. *Winning Beginning NY (WBNY)* is committed to ensuring that all children have access to high quality early care and education programs that provide a foundation for later achievement in life and learning.

WBNY has identified the establishment of a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) as one of its top priorities because of its effectiveness in improving program quality. QRIS has been implemented in 14 states, with another 32 in the design phase because of its ability to enhance outcomes for children, educate both providers and consumers about quality, and maximize the use of resources through planning, coordination and common learning standards. A QRIS establishes standards of program excellence. It provides a research-based tool for assessing the quality of early childhood programs and publicizes the results by assigning each program with one to five stars. It provides a roadmap for provider improvement and an accountability measure for progress and funding. It offers a consumer guide that gives parents the tools to more effectively select an appropriate setting for their children. It also creates a comprehensive strategy for aligning the quality of programs and the investment of public resources. By aligning funding, technical assistance and professional development, a QRIS can help the current fragmented early care and education system become more efficient and accountable.

Drawing on their own expertise and the experiences of other states, for the past two years a group of diverse stakeholders—including many members of *WBNY*, and foundations, advocates, and representatives from state and local government, education and child care resource and referral agencies—have been working to develop an outline of what a QRIS might look like in New York. Ultimately, however, the expertise and support of New York State is required to finalize a plan for implementing QRIS in our State. Specifically we ask that the Governor:

- Allocate funding and staff resources to complete the design of a QRIS based upon the research conducted by the New York State QRS Work Group. To move implementation forward, OCFS and SED staff should take the lead, joining with members of the NYS QRS Work Group, to finalize rating standards, design the infrastructure and estimate the costs for managing, staffing and evaluating the system;
- Collect baseline data on the quality of existing early childhood programs in order to assess the impact of a QRIS. Too often, new initiatives in New York are begun without adequate information about current status. Our children are too important and our dollars are too

few to fund initiatives without investing in an evaluation component that can accurately assess the impact of programs.

- Allocate funding for several pilot sites to field test components of the QRIS. Several communities across the state have invested in quality improvements (e.g. incentives, technical assistance) and coordinated planning that would provide excellent sites for piloting QRIS to refine the initiative before rolling it out statewide.
- Issue a report and funding request for the following year to launch New York State's Quality Rating and Improvement System.