



Alliance for
**Early
Childhood
Finance**

Effective QRIS Standards: The Few and the Powerful

QRIS 2014 National Meeting
July 25, 2014

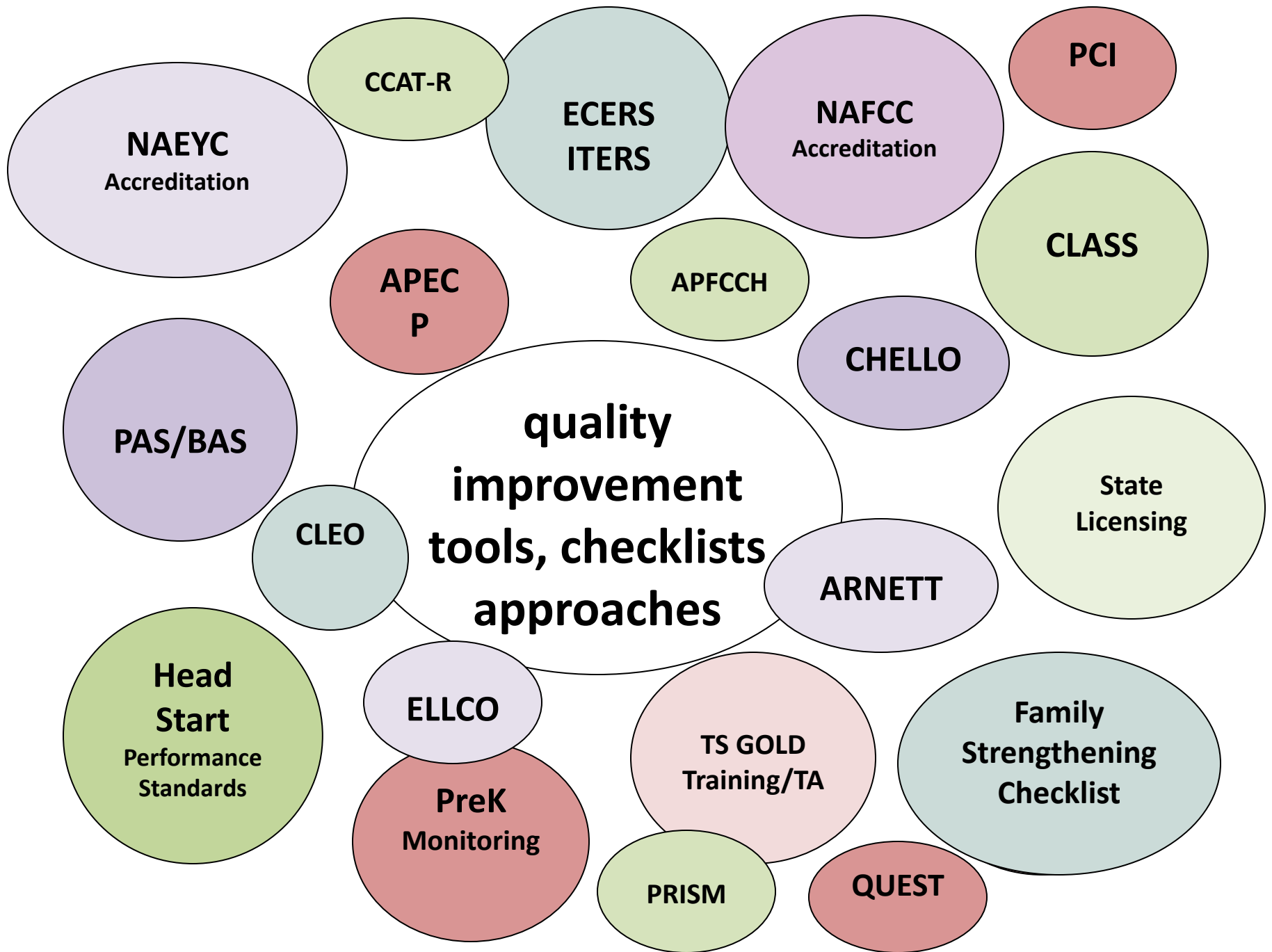
Louise Stoney

Co-Founder, Alliance for Early Childhood Finance and
Opportunities Exchange



“Having returned to the world of child care after 10 years away, what strikes me most is that everyone’s time is absolutely saturated with requirements from overlapping agencies. This morning I ran out of brain cells for doing our accreditation process so I added up the required papers, the number of items counted, checked, tallied, or otherwise dealt with is 4, 726. The number of pages of paper generated is 2,250. It’s time to realize that “less is more.” Every requirement we must meet takes away an opportunity for action in another area. At the end of the day, I am grateful I get to go home and cook potatoes so I can do something real.”

Joan, Program Coordinator



QRIS Are Rapidly Becoming Paper Tigers

- How many standards are included in your QRIS? How many different 'sources of evidence' are required?
- Have you counted the number of documents that must be downloaded, uploaded, verified?
- Are you requiring verification of documents in each site even if the sites are linked by a central administration?



QRIS TA Staff/Coaches typically spend the MOST time helping programs:

- Assemble the documentation packet
- Pick out new materials or equipment for the program
- Prepare the for their ERS observations

TA Providers/Coaches typically spend the LEAST amount of time:

- Modeling and activity or teaching strategy
- Helping staff implementing proactive, intentional teaching practices
- Curriculum (implementing, adapting, revising)
- Child assessment (implementing, reviewing, using results to guide practice)

Is it time to re-think some assumptions?

“We are, at this moment in the United States, so deeply invested in the idea of psychometric and ‘scientific’ justifications for our educational practices that we seem to have forgotten there could be any other justification paradigm. We seem to have forgotten there could be any other way to hold ourselves accountable.”

Is it time to re-think some assumptions?

Traditional View: Leader as Hero

- Leaders have the answers; they know what to do
- People do what they are told; they just need good instruction
- High risk requires high control

What Does Quality Leadership Really Look Like?



Creating an organizational culture that encourages everyone in the program thinking deeply about their work.

“It seems to me the real magic transpires when a director gets very clear on her own vision for her program and links that vision up with aspects of these standards and assessment tools.

How can we change the frame so the tools are working for us rather than we are jumping through hoops for them?

How do we dig deeper into the intention of all these criteria as a means for reflecting on our current work?”

Ann Hentschel, Illinois QRIS



A New Approach to Leadership

(from Margaret Wheatley)

- Order vs Control
- Power With vs Power Over
- Leadership as a Behavior not a Role

Control

- Teachers/Directors accountable to regulators, funders, state standards
- PD is mandated and always delivered externally
- Compliance with rules is paramount; curiosity and communication discourages
- Staff wait to be told what to do
- Compliance with standards is the goal

Order

- Teachers/Directors accountable to each other guided by core values
- PD is woven into the daily work; with time & space for staff to reflect & learn from one another
- Curiosity and communication encouraged
- Staff understand their role and feel empowered to act
- Standards are a platform or framework, not a goal

The Principal Elements of Quality

- Highly skilled teachers
- Age-appropriate curricula
- A language rich environment
- Warm, responsive interactions between staff and children
- High and consistent levels of child participation
- Small class sizes and high adult-to-child ratios

A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy

Using Evidence to Improve Outcomes in Learning, Behavior, and Health for Vulnerable Children



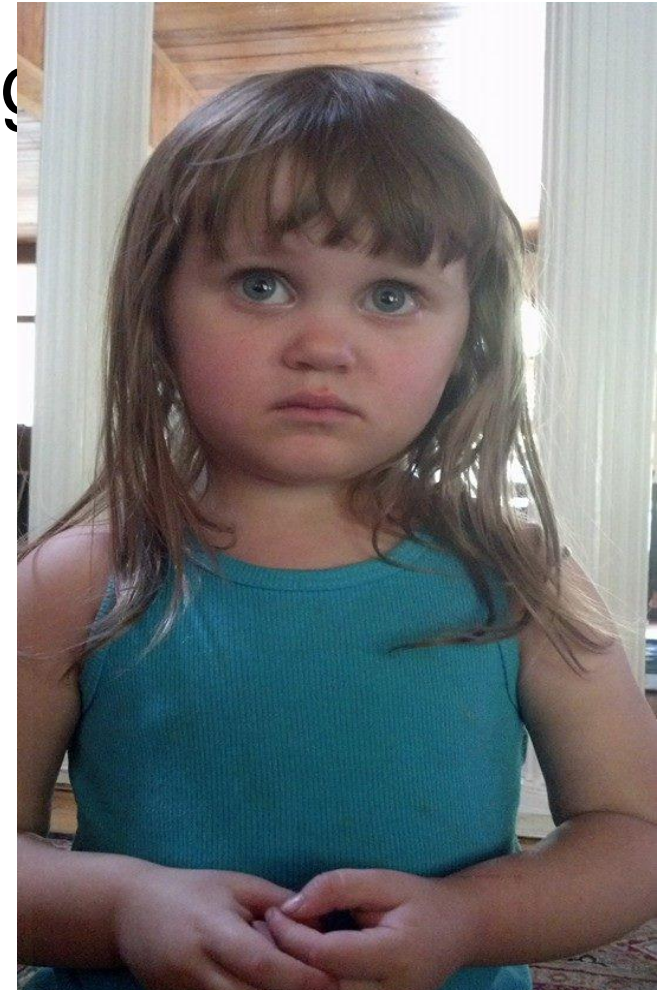
Center on the Developing Child  HARVARD UNIVERSITY
NATIONAL FORUM ON EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM EVALUATION
NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD

Challenge: QRIS with Meaningful Standards for Many Sectors

- The operative word is **MEANINGFUL**.
- How do we create QRIS standards that **MAKE SENSE** for a wide range of settings: market-based child care, public school Prek, Head Start, early intervention?
- The key is to balance simplicity, flexibility and accountability.
- Focus on a few, meaningful standards that can effectively measure quality, across sectors

Lessons from the QRIS Think Tank: Most Powerful QRIS Standards

- Teaching and Learning Environment
- Teacher and Director Education
- Staff/Child Ratios & Group Sizes
- Continuous Quality Improvement



Teaching and Learning Environment

- Learning Environment assessed using some objective measure (e.g. ERS, CLASS or similar instrument)
- Teachers use child assessment to guide instruction



Teacher and Director Education



- Higher Education (jury still out on how much)

AND

- Specialized training focused on child development and effective teaching

Staff/Child Ratios and Group Sizes

ONLY IF:

- licensing requirements are too low
- State makes funding available to cover cost of lower ratios in higher rated programs



Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

- Best when the ECE program co-creates and *owns* the plan.
- CQI is rooted in a core values, program-based leadership, time and supervision for reflection
 - Think about this as a process standard
- Quality improvement plans don't have to be the same for every program

Is a Points Structure an effective strategy to simplify QRIS?

OPRE recently looked at ratings in block, point and hybrid systems. While each of the three structures significantly correlated with observed quality as measured by ECERS-R, they found that:

“the points structure was the only structure to produce quality levels in which observed quality was significantly different between each level.”

OPRE Research Brief, 2014

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/ecls_brief1.pdf

Keep Asking Questions

- Will measuring compliance with this standard REALLY make a difference in quality? Are there multiple ways to comply?
- Can we identify broad categories of standards, with flexible ways – multiple pathways – to comply?
- What are the trade-offs? if a standard is expensive to monitor or to implement,

Keep Asking Questions

- How might we include process standards? (e.g. standards that require participation in a process rather than a specific outcome.)
- How can we maximize automation to streamline paperwork?
- What else do we need to know?

Discussion

Thinking about your State QRIS, what standards do you think could be eliminated/revised?

Turn to your neighbor and discuss; then we'll open up to the whole group.

