

ExceleRate Illinois

Proposed Standards Framework

March 2023



Governor's Office of
Early Childhood Development

Presentation to the Quality & Workforce Committee

March 16, 2023

Background

- What keeps child care centers from moving up the quality ladder?
- 3+ years of work by the former ExceleRate Subcommittee, 2018 - 2021
- New ExceleRate framework proposed, Dec. 2021 – based on two new “quality drivers”.

Goals for today

- Approve this recommendation as a roadmap (not approval of every standard as written)
- Make comments for consideration by other committees and State agencies
- Additional comments may be sent by email to tom.layman@illinois.gov

ExceleRate Subcommittee Accomplishments & Work Products

Toni Porter, Subcommittee Co-Chair

Senior Director of Professional Development, INCCRRA

2018

Interviewed center directors and school principals about their approach to quality improvement

2019 – Identified quality driver #1: [Build Cultures of Improvement](#)

Wrote: “Continuous Quality Improvement: What does a program leader do?”

-- Identified quality driver #2: [“Funding First” – focus on staffing](#)

Wrote: “Vision for ExceleRate and Funding System Integration”

2020

Drafted the revised standards framework

Helped launch the ExceleRate Child Care Center Pilot to test proposed CQI standards

2021

Finalized the revised standards framework proposal for child care centers and schools

Organizations Represented on ExceleRate Subcommittee 2018–2021

(Not a complete list)

Allison’s Child Care
Austin Child Care Providers Network
Carole Robertson Center
Chicago DFSS
Chicago Public Schools
City Colleges of Chicago Parent Council
DCFS
Early CHOICES
Educare Network
Erikson Institute
IDHS
Illinois Action for Children
Illinois Head Start Association
INCCRRA

ISBE
Joliet Township Infant Center
Kiddie Kollege Early Childhood Center
KinderCare Learning Centers
McCormick Center
Montessori Foundations of Chicago
Montessori Public Policy Initiative
Robert R. McCormick Foundation
SEIU
Start Early
Steans Family Foundation
The Center: Early Childhood Professional
Learning
YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago

Stakeholder Reviews during 2022

Tom Layman, ExceleRate Policy Director, GOECD

- Further review and discussion with State agencies – ISBE and IDHS
- City of Chicago reviews – Chicago Public Schools; Dept. of Family & Community Services
- Detailed review and edits from the Latino Policy Forum
- Discussions with consultants to the Illinois BUILD team

Planned Steps for 2023

Reviews by:

- Quality & Workforce Committee
- Family Advisory Committee
- Interagency Team
- ELC Executive Committee & full Early Learning Council

Then forward to GOECD and State agencies as a roadmap for policy development

Transmission of Proposal to the Quality & Workforce Committee

ExceleRate Subcommittee co-chairs:

Toni Porter, Senior Director of Professional Development, INCCRRA

Dr. Teri Talan, Senior Policy Advisor, McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership

At its meeting in December 2021, the ExceleRate Subcommittee completed 3½ years of work (32 meetings) and finalized its Framework proposal. The former ELC Quality Committee had followed the proposal's development and supported the Subcommittee's direction and goals. However, the ELC suspended work at the start of 2022 pending reorganization, and the Quality Committee was unable to give final approval. We are now submitting the Subcommittee's completed proposal to this new Quality & Workforce Committee.

We are pleased that the Subcommittee's work has already had impact: (1) The ExceleRate Pilot centers have achieved good results in testing the proposed standards for Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), (2) IDHS is continuing to develop and support the Pilot approach to contracts, and (3) ISBE has strengthened its guidance on CQI.

Changes – Big Picture

Tom Layman

1. **“Funding First”**

Make “foundational contracts” available to support the staffing needed at each Circle of Quality (not as a requirement of ExceleRate, but as an essential support for quality).

2. **Support “Cultures of Improvement”**

Incorporate new standards and provide coaching to help programs implement Continuous Quality Improvement.

3. **Implement updated quality ladder from Licensed to Gold Plus**

Leading Culture Change: What does a program leader do?

Leadership
Essentials

1. Lead by example
2. Establish time for communication
3. Develop teams; share leadership
4. Build professional learning into program improvement

Administrative
Leadership

Pedagogical
Leadership

5. Engage families and staff to shape program mission and values
6. Know program standards
7. Facilitate annual goal-setting
8. Lead weekly or monthly CQI cycles



Revised Quality Ladder

Bronze

Silver

Gold

Gold Plus

Aligned Funding

Quality Contracts
(DHS)

Quality Contracts
(DHS)

Preschool for All

Head Start/EHS
PFA Expansion Model
Prevention Initiative

Performance Focus

Leadership &
equity centered
culture of
Improvement

Formalizes CQI -
team meetings,
etc.

School Readiness

Comprehensive Services
to meet family needs

Performance Domains

Culture of Improvement, Administration, Teaching & Learning, Family & Community Engagement

Implications for Programs (page 1 of 2)

Teri Talan, Subcommittee Co-Chair

Use of ERS or CLASS, and PAS scores

- Baseline assessment results to be provided up front and confidentially, for programs' CQI work.
- Modest overall scores still required for Circle of Quality recognition, but requirements for specific subscale scores and requirements for "no classroom below" have been dropped.
- ERS scoring modifications will be made for Montessori programs and potentially other such models.

Staff credential requirements

- Gateways credential requirements for teaching staff have been eliminated. Requirements are seen as a function of funding (as in PFA). [Note: The current requirements have been suspended for child care centers since 2013.]

Implications for Programs (page 2 of 2)

New Culture of Improvement section

- Programs will need to demonstrate regular team meetings for continuous improvement. Includes discussion of values, use of data to improve DEI, work environment, and global quality. Additional quality topics at Gold and Gold Plus. New required training at Gold on physical activity and nutrition.

Dual Language Learners, culturally responsive teaching strategies, and children with disabilities and developmental delays

- More specific standards and guidance in the Teaching & Learning section and in the Family & Community Engagement section.

New Bronze and Gold-Plus tiers

- Bronze no longer a training-only tier. It will require demonstration of first steps to improving quality. Aligned funding contracts are envisioned.
- Gold-Plus is a proposed new tier that recognizes excellence in comprehensive services for families, with a focus on enrolling and serving Priority Populations.

Changes that will require budget increases and legislation over time

- Full implementation of aligned contract proposal. Current IDHS planning envisions Smart Start Quality Grants to support staffing starting at the Bronze tier.
- Full implementation of aligned coaching (through IDHS & ISBE support service contracts)
- Full alignment of Preschool for All and the PFA Expansion Model with Gold and Gold Plus requirements

Phase-in

The proposed framework is intended as a roadmap for use in policy development. It does not include a timeline for implementation.

Once the ELC approves this proposal, GOECD will facilitate discussions with IDHS, ISBE, and DCFS about implementation feasibility and timing.

Questions for Subcommittee Co-Chairs?



Proposed Action, March 16, 2023

Committee Co-Chairs: Christi Chadwick and Bela Moté

- Approve “ExceleRate Illinois Revised Framework” (dated 3/2/23) as a roadmap for policy development by GOECD and State agencies. This action does not include approval of every standard as written.
- Add comments or questions for consideration by other committees and State agencies.
- Submit to ELC Executive Committee with this committee’s comments.

Additional comments or questions may be emailed to tom.layman@illinois.gov

Final approved document will be transmitted to GOECD, IDHS, ISBE, and DCFS as a recommendation from the Early Learning Council.