

A Guide to the Qualistar Rating



Providing high-quality early learning programs isn't a simple task. Though most programs consistently strive to improve quality, many financial and economic burdens make it a tough road for even the most dedicated providers. Programs participating in the Qualistar Rating process have taken an important step in their continuous quality improvement journey. As part of the Qualistar Rating, programs are given a profile that contains an objective view of both their strengths and areas for improvement. This profile also offers valuable suggestions on how to improve the overall quality of their program.

Qualistar Early Learning and the entire early childhood community salute all participating programs for joining this exciting journey and believe that they are truly pioneers, making a BIG difference in the lives of our children.

THE QUALISTAR RATING

What is it?

A comprehensive assessment conducted by Qualistar Early Learning of the quality of an early learning program. This assessment takes place over a one-month period of time, and is completed on a yearly basis.

What does it measure?

The Qualistar Rating, measures many different aspects of a program and points are awarded to a program in each quality component area.

- ❖ The Learning Environment: 0-10 points can be earned
- ❖ Family Partnerships: 0-10 points can be earned
- ❖ Training and Education of staff: 0-10 points can be earned
- ❖ Ratios and Group Sizes: 0-10 points can be earned
- ❖ National Accreditation status of a program: 0 or 2 points can be earned

All of the points that programs earn in each of these quality components are added together to arrive at a **Qualistar** Rating.

THE EARLY LEARNING REPORT

What is it?

An important tool for families when choosing care for their children, the Early Learning Report is a short summary of the areas of strength and the areas for quality improvement in an early learning program. The report outlines the points that programs scored in each of the quality components of the Qualistar Rating and provides the overall star level that a program received.

Families can view Early Learning Reports by city, so that they can choose the best care for their children in convenient areas and so that families can choose care based on the components of quality that are most important to them.

UNDERSTANDING THE QUALSTAR POINTS IN EACH QUALITY COMPONENT

The Learning Environment

0-3 Points	Programs typically are struggling to retain staff, there may be some health and safety improvements needed, additional materials may be needed to stimulate learning and the daily schedule may not provide children with choices or child friendly activities.
4-7 Points	Generally programs have fewer health and safety improvements needed, there are many learning materials available to children, and the daily schedule promotes more flexibility and gives children opportunities to choose learning activities.
8-10 Points	Programs are clean, safe, and organized with established health and safety routines and practices, providers guide activities and have materials that promote many different learning areas (math; art, literacy, science, music/movement, etc), providers promote positive peer interaction and facilitate an environment that promotes learning and creativity.

Why is this important for children?

Children who have access to learning materials, time to explore materials and ideas, and a competent and trained adult to guide their learning become curious and active learners. High quality programs promote problem solving, positive peer interaction, social development and language development, to name a few. These competencies all translate into greater school readiness skills for young children.

Family Partnerships

0-3 Points	Programs are just beginning to develop policies to include families. Some families may feel that they do not have enough communication with the program about their child's day and how their child is progressing in the program.
4-7 Points	Providers offer opportunities for families to participate in the program, give families a chance to learn about the program and specifically how their child is doing, and some materials may be available for families to learn more about community activities, parenting skills or child development.
8-10 Points	Programs usually have a well developed plan to communicate and gather feedback from families, offer family participation activities including decision-making and leadership opportunities, and have many resources available to learn about community activities, parenting workshops, etc. Families are kept consistently informed of the growth and progress of their child and participate in goal setting for their child.

Why is this important for children?

Programs that strive to partner with families create a feeling of safety for families. If families feel safe and welcome in a program, they are more likely to participate in activities and learn from staff about age appropriate practices that promote school readiness skills. Family participation in early learning programs is an important component in the continued academic success of children.

Training and Education

0-2 Points	Providers usually have little formal training in early childhood education and the administrative staff usually has the minimum credentials set forth by the state.
3-5 Points	Most staff has taken introductory early childhood education classes or trainings. Administrative staff may have the minimum credentials set forth by the state or A.A. degrees in early childhood education.
6-7 Points	Many staff has taken early childhood courses, some staff may have A.A. degrees in early childhood education and the administrative staff may have A.A. degrees or B.A. degrees in early childhood education.
8-10 Points	Most staff have at least A.A. degrees in early childhood education and many of the staff may have B.A. degrees or higher. The administrative staff may have B.A. or M.A. degrees in early childhood education.

Why is this important to children?

Providers that have formal coursework in early childhood education are more able to create age appropriate activities and curricula and are better at promoting positive peer interaction and social development. Administrative staff with more formal education and training is also more able to provide leadership and support to their staff in delivering quality learning experiences for children.

Ratios and Group Size

0-1 Points	Programs do not consistently meet state licensing requirements that govern ratios and group sizes.
2-3 Points	Programs are meeting state licensing requirements that govern ratios and group sizes.
4-7 Points	Programs are more consistently providing lower group sizes and ratios than set forth by licensing standards.
8-10 Points	Programs are consistently providing small group sizes and low adult to child ratios that are considered national best practices.

Why is this important for children?

Programs that consistently have low adult to child ratios and that have smaller group sizes are more able to deliver higher quality services to children and families. Providers are more able to individualize curriculum and promote positive peer interaction. For infants and toddlers, lower ratios allow much more personalized attention to help meet their basic needs. For preschoolers, smaller group sizes help children to concentrate and extend learning activities.

National Accreditation

0 Points	Programs are not accredited through a national early childhood accrediting agency
2 Points	Programs are accredited through a national early childhood agency

Why is this important?

Programs that have achieved national accreditation have clearly demonstrated a commitment to assessing their own program and working to improve the quality of their program through meeting national standards.

Qualistar Early Learning is changing the face of early education in Colorado. We are the first in the nation to combine a thorough early care and education accountability system with a statewide network of resource and referral agencies. We are dedicated to improving early learning experiences for all children by developing and implementing a statewide early childhood education system that empowers both providers and parents. We offer a 4-star rating system and a continuous improvement program that measures quality and supplies hundreds of providers with tools and strategies for success.