

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Can Quality Improvement System Improve Childcare Site Performance in School Readiness?

Ma, X., Shen, J., Lu, X., Brandi, K., Goodman, J., & Watson, G. (2013). Can quality improvement system improve childcare site performance in school readiness? *The Journal of Educational Research*, 106(2), 146-156.
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SUMMARY: An investigation around the effectiveness of the Quality Improvement System (QIS) developed and implemented by Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County (Florida) was conducted. This three year study looked at whether or not children in programs that participated in QIS showed greater growth in school readiness than the children in programs that did not participate. Overall, participation in QIS helps lift QIS sites out of the low performing programs category or prevents them from falling into this category, as well as having some effects on children's school readiness outcomes.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The children in QIS programs developed initial sound fluency skills significantly faster than children in non-QIS programs.
- The probability of becoming a low-performing program was greater among the non-QIS sites.
- QIS sites grew at the same rate as non-QIS sites in school readiness rate, key child development domains, and letter naming and recognition, over the course of the three year study.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Encourage military families to consider childcare centers that participate in a quality improvement system
- Provide military families with comprehensive information on child development

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide workshops for military families on child development and what to attend to when looking for a high quality childcare program
- Develop on-line resources for military families about high quality childcare programs

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage awareness among professionals working with Service members' families and communities about the key components of high-quality childcare programs
- Recommend collaboration between Department of Defense programs and local community organizations to support high quality childcare programs

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METHODS

- This study included were 18 QIS sites and 28 non-QIS sites in Palm Beach County. They were comparable in terms of children's socioeconomic and racial/ethnic background.
- Five outcome measures were used in this trend analysis study: the Early Childhood Observation System, Letter Naming Fluency, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, Sound Fluency, and Low-performing provider measures.
- Analysis was conducted to determine any differences in growth around the five measures between QIS and non-QIS programs over the three year study period.

PARTICIPANTS

- In QIS and non-QIS sites there were 40% of the children were White, and 59% with limited English proficiency.
- Eighty-three percent of the QIS sites were private versus 68% of the non-QIS and 17% of the QIS sites were faith-based versus 7% of the non-QIS sites.
- About 40% of the children in both QIS and non-QIS were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches and about two-thirds of the children had a disability.

LIMITATIONS

- The study included only childcare sites from one county in Florida; therefore, the results are not generalizable.
- The number of children from each program site for each year of the study was not provided; therefore, it was difficult to ascertain the validity of the data analyses.
- It was not clear whether or not QIS and non-QIS sites had populations representative of comparable childcares programs; therefore, results need to be interpreted with caution.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Investigate potential mechanisms of the observed QIS effects on childcare programs
- Engage in an alignment study between QIS components, including professional development, and child readiness developmental domains
- Evaluate military families awareness of what constitutes a high quality childcare program

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