

School-Age Child Care (K-5) Quality Framework

April 2011



BrightStars: Rhode Island's Quality Rating and Improvement System for Child Care and Early Learning Programs

Rhode Island has developed BrightStars, a voluntary quality rating and improvement system, in order to improve family access to high quality child care and early learning programs across the state. Quality rating and improvement systems exist in many states across the country and are a proven strategy to systematically improve the quality of child care and early learning programs.

Quality rating systems measure program quality with a set of community-developed, research-based standards. State licensing requirements establish the foundation for operating child care and early learning programs. These regulations specify the minimum standards that must be met to operate legally and are the first step in a quality rating and improvement system. Higher levels in quality rating systems recognize programs for exceeding basic licensing standards and implementing practices that research shows are best for children.

BrightStars is a 5-level quality rating and improvement system. In order to participate in BrightStars, programs must have a current, valid license from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families or an approval from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and have a commitment to continuous quality improvement. Participating programs must also be in compliance with all critical areas of licensing including: staff-child ratio, staff qualifications, supervision of children, licensed capacity, safe environment, safe transportation, criminal background checks, and other areas.

Programs that achieve higher levels of BrightStars recognition have demonstrated that they are implementing important research-based practices known to promote child development and learning. Each incremental step

in BrightStars is an important step toward best practice. BrightStars assesses programs using six quality domains:

- Child's Daily Experience
- Teaching and Learning
- Staff-Child Ratio and Group Size
- Family Communication and Involvement
- Staff Qualifications
- Program Management

BrightStars is advised by a steering committee including representatives from all sectors of the early learning and child care field, state department leaders, providers, and key local experts and advocates. Families from across Rhode Island have been engaged throughout the development of BrightStars to ensure the standards reflect what matters to parents. The BrightStars standards and measurement system was field tested in 2008 in partnership with national researchers from the FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina.

BrightStars is a public-private partnership managed by the Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children. Key partners include the United Way of Rhode Island, RI Department of Human Services, RI Department of Children, Youth and Families, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and RI Department of Health.

For more information visit www.BrightStars.org.

BrightStars School-Age Child Care (K-5) Standards and Criteria

The following is a snapshot of the BrightStars School-Age Child Care (K-5) Quality Framework. Standards and criteria are listed under each of the respective six BrightStars quality domains. Under "Level 1", "Level 2", etc., a check mark indicates that BrightStars will assess criteria at that level. For each criteria, an increase in check marks indicates an increase or difference in what is required to achieve a higher star rating.

STANDARD	CRITERIA	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
Domain 1: Child's Daily Experience						
Child's Daily Experience	Licensing Compliance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Learning Environment		✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓
Domain 2: Teaching and Learning						
Curriculum, Child Assessment, and Process of Learning	Curriculum		✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
	Child Assessment				✓	✓✓
Domain 3: Staff-Child Ratio and Group Size						
Minimum Staff-Child Ratio	Staff-Child Ratio		✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓
	Staff-Child Ratio Communicated		✓	✓	✓	✓
Maximum Group Size	Group Size		✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓
	Group Space		✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Domain 4: Family Communication and Involvement						
Family Communication and Involvement	Family Communication		✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Domain 5: Staff Qualifications						
Lead Staff Qualifications	Professional Development		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Formal Education			✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Program Director Qualifications	Formal Education			✓	✓	✓
Domain 6: Program Management						
Program Management	Program Self-Assessment		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Quality Improvement Plan		✓	✓	✓	✓

How to Use this Document

This framework is designed for use by school-age child care programs serving children ages kindergarten through fifth grade. It describes the standards and criteria BrightStars uses to assign programs a star rating.

BrightStars Standard Name

Definition of Standard

Levels: five vertical columns show the levels in which you can achieve a star rating

BrightStars Criteria

Domain 1: Child's Daily Experience

Standard 1: Child's Daily Experience

Daily activities and interactions show that the program is providing a **safe, healthy, and stimulating environment**. The program provides indoor and outdoor space to support varied and enriching experiences for children. Daily interactions demonstrate that **staff respect, care for, and enjoy working with children**. The program supports **the inclusion of children with disabilities**, responds to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the population it serves, and **promotes the acceptance of diversity** among staff, families, and children.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four	Level Five	Measurement	Resources
Licensing Compliance Compliance in all critical areas of licensing	Licensing Compliance Compliance in all critical areas of licensing +	Licensing Compliance Compliance in all critical areas of licensing +	Licensing Compliance Compliance in all critical areas of licensing +	Licensing Compliance Compliance in all critical areas of licensing +	• DCYF monitoring report • SACERS • COA After School Recognition	• DCYF Licensing • RI Child Care Facilities Fund • RIASPA • PASA • SACERS • COA After School Recognition resources • RI After School Quality Standards • Self-assessment tools • RIPQA
	Learning Environment Comprehensive self-assessment (see Standard 8)	Learning Environment Average SACERS score/s of 3.0 or greater, with no observed group SACERS score less than 2.5 ¹ OR COA After School Recognition	Learning Environment Average SACERS score/s of 4.0 or greater, with no observed group SACERS score less than 3.0 OR COA After School Recognition	Learning Environment Average SACERS score/s of 5.0 or greater, with no observed group SACERS score less than 3.0 OR COA After School Recognition		

¹If the program is organized into self-contained groups, SACERS scores will be collected from a random sample of 33% of groups and scores will be averaged. If the program is run as one large group, one SACERS will be completed on the entire program. COA After School Recognition programs will also have SACERS data collected, but the scores will not be used in the rating process.

BrightStars Quality Domain

Measurement: tools and methods used to assess program quality

Resources: selected quality improvement resources

"+" Plus represents additional criteria needed to achieve a rating in that level

"OR" represents one criteria or another needed to achieve a rating in that level

Standard 1: Child's Daily Experience

Daily activities and interactions show that the program is providing a **safe, healthy, and stimulating environment**. The program provides indoor and outdoor space to support varied and enriching experiences for children. Daily interactions demonstrate that **staff respect, care for, and enjoy**

working with children. The program supports **the inclusion of children with disabilities**, responds to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the population it serves, and **promotes the acceptance of diversity** among staff, families, and children.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four	Level Five	Measurement	Resources
<p>Licensing Compliance Compliance in all critical areas of licensing</p>	<p>Licensing Compliance Compliance in all critical areas of licensing</p> <p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <p>Learning Environment Comprehensive self-assessment (see Standard 8)</p>	<p>Licensing Compliance Compliance in all critical areas of licensing</p> <p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <p>Learning Environment Average SACERS score/s of 3.0 or greater, with no observed group SACERS score less than 2.5¹</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>COA After School Recognition</p>	<p>Licensing Compliance Compliance in all critical areas of licensing</p> <p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <p>Learning Environment Average SACERS score/s of 4.0 or greater, with no observed group SACERS score less than 3.0</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>COA After School Recognition</p>	<p>Licensing Compliance Compliance in all critical areas of licensing</p> <p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <p>Learning Environment Average SACERS score/s of 5.0 or greater, with no observed group SACERS score less than 3.0</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>COA After School Recognition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCYF monitoring report • SACERS • COA After School Recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCYF Licensing • RI Child Care Facilities Fund • RIASPA • PASA • SACERS • COA After School Recognition resources • RI <i>After School Quality Standards</i> • Self-assessment tools • RIPQA

¹If the program is organized into self-contained groups, SACERS scores will be collected from a random sample of 33% of groups and scores will be averaged. If the program is run as one large group, one SACERS will be completed on the entire program. COA After School Recognition programs will also have SACERS data collected, but the scores will not be used in the rating process.

Standard 2: Curriculum, Child Assessment, and Process of Learning

The program uses a program plan, curriculum, or curriculum framework. The program provides many **opportunities for children to learn and practice skills** across a broad range of developmental areas including social,

emotional, physical, cognitive, and language. The program **systematically and routinely gathers information** about each child in order to meet the individual needs of children and provide differentiated learning experiences.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four	Level Five	Measurement	Resources
School-age program licensing requires a plan book on site which details program planning for at least a month in advance	Curriculum Comprehensive self-assessment (see Standard 8)	Curriculum Comprehensive self-assessment (see Standard 8)	<p>Curriculum The program plan or curriculum includes weekly opportunities for each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • active physical activity • creative expression • academic support <p style="text-align: center;">+ </p> <p>Child Assessment The program gathers information about each child through at least one of the following: observations, checklists, interest inventories, family/child surveys or interviews, school performance information, or other assessment tools</p>	<p>Curriculum The program plan or curriculum includes two or more different opportunities weekly for each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • active physical activity • creative expression • academic support <p style="text-align: center;">+ </p> <p>Child Assessment The program gathers information about each child through at least two of the following: observations, checklists, interest inventories, family/child surveys or interviews, school performance information, or other assessment tools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program plan/ curriculum review • Documentation of child assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COA After School Recognition resources

Standard 3: Minimum Staff-Child Ratio

Programs have enough staff members to supervise the children and to support learning and development of each child, including children with disabilities.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four	Level Five	Measurement	Resources
School-age program licensing requires a staff-child ratio of one adult to thirteen children be maintained	<p>Staff-Child Ratio 1:13²</p> <p>————— + —————</p> <p>Staff-Child Ratio Communicated Minimum staff-child ratio is clearly communicated to parents/families</p>	<p>Staff-Child Ratio 1:13</p> <p>————— + —————</p> <p>Staff-Child Ratio Communicated Minimum staff-child ratio is clearly communicated to parents/families</p>	<p>Staff-Child Ratio 1:13</p> <p>1:12 if the program serves any Kindergarteners</p> <p>————— + —————</p> <p>Staff-Child Ratio Communicated Minimum staff-child ratio is clearly communicated to parents/families</p>	<p>Staff-Child Ratio 1:13</p> <p>1:12 if the program serves any Kindergarteners</p> <p>————— + —————</p> <p>Staff-Child Ratio Communicated Minimum staff-child ratio is clearly communicated to parents/families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of staff-child ratio • Documentation of staff-child ratio communicated to families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCYF Licensing

²Ratio will be determined based on the total # of children present during observation and the total # of staff present during observation.

Standard 4: Maximum Group Size

Group size is the number of children who occupy a defined space while engaged in a specific activity. Programs plan for and **provide appropriate group sizes** for children according to the type, complexity, and difficulty

of activities as well as the ages, abilities, developmental levels, and needs of children.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four	Level Five	Measurement	Resources
N/A	<p>Group Size 26 children³</p>	<p>Group Size 26 children</p> <p>————— + —————</p> <p>Group Space No more than 52 children in a room⁴</p>	<p>Group Size 26 children</p> <p>24 if the program serves any Kindergarteners</p> <p>————— + —————</p> <p>Group Space No more than 52 children in a room</p> <p>No more than 48 children in a room if the program serves any Kindergarteners</p>	<p>Group Size 26 children</p> <p>24 if the program serves any Kindergarteners</p> <p>————— + —————</p> <p>Group Space No more than 26 children in a room</p> <p>No more than 24 children in a room if the program serves any Kindergarteners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of group size • Observation of group space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RI Child Care Facilities Fund

³Group size will be determined based on the total # of children in a group or activity throughout the observation; intermingling is permitted. Exceptions to group/activity size include: meal/snack time, outdoor time, arrival, departure, and special activities. Times for these exceptions to group/activity size should not exceed more than 1/3 of the total time children are in attendance. For example, activities which are exceptions to group size should not last more than 1 hour in a 3-hour program. For more information on how this standard is assessed, see 'Program Observation Information' in the BrightStars School-Age Child Care application materials.

⁴A room has floor-to-ceiling walls.

Standard 5: Family Communication and Involvement

The program **communicates regularly and effectively** with families, encourages active two-way communication, offers regular opportunities for family involvement, and **works to build partnerships with families**.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four	Level Five	Measurement	Resources
School-age program licensing requires an open door policy, pre-admission conference, parent-staff conferences, ongoing communication, and a directory of community resources	<p>Family Communication Program offers one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly newsletter • Family meeting, social event, or workshop (four times per year) • Ideas and suggestions to support learning at home (four times per year) • Annual family survey • Parent-staff conferences (twice per year) • An advisory board that includes families meets four times per year 	<p>Family Communication Program offers one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly newsletter • Family meeting, social event, or workshop (four times per year) • Ideas and suggestions to support learning at home (four times per year) • Annual family survey • Parent-staff conferences (twice per year) • An advisory board that includes families meets four times per year 	<p>Family Communication Program offers two of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly newsletter • Family meeting, social event, or workshop (four times per year) • Ideas and suggestions to support learning at home (four times per year) • Annual family survey • Parent-staff conferences (twice per year) • An advisory board that includes families meets four times per year 	<p>Family Communication Program offers three of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly newsletter • Family meeting, social event, or workshop (four times per year) • Ideas and suggestions to support learning at home (four times per year) • Annual family survey • Parent-staff conferences (twice per year) • An advisory board that includes families meets four times per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of newsletters, events, ideas/suggestions, family survey, or parent-staff conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COA After School Recognition resources

Standard 6: Lead Staff Qualifications

Lead staff have primary responsibility for children in the program. Lead staff should have the **formal education and professional preparation** to work with school-age children.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four	Level Five	Measurement	Resources
School-age program licensing requires school age staff to be at least 18 years of age and have had either formal training in child care or at least one year of supervised experience working with school age children in a group setting	Professional Development All lead staff ⁵ have an individual professional development plan	Professional Development All lead staff have an individual professional development plan + Formal Education All lead staff have 12 college credits in any field	Professional Development All lead staff have an individual professional development plan + Formal Education All lead staff have 24 college credits in any field	Professional Development All lead staff have an individual professional development plan + Formal Education All lead staff have an Associate’s Degree or higher or 60 college credits in any field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of completed worksheet or plan • College diplomas and transcripts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rhode Island Core Knowledge and Core Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals</i> • Community colleges • Four-year colleges and universities • Credit-bearing coursework offered through community agencies

⁵Programs must have a sufficient number of lead staff. Programs seeking a rating of 1, 2, or 3 Stars must name one lead staff for every 26 enrolled children; programs seeking a rating of 4 or 5 Stars who serve Kindergarteners must name one lead staff for every 24 enrolled children.

Standard 7: Program Director Qualifications

The administrator responsible for the program has the **formal education and professional preparation** to manage the program and act as a pedagogical leader.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four	Level Five	Measurement	Resources
School-age program licensing requires the director to have experience in administration or professional preparation in a field appropriate for those who work with school age children	N/A	Formal Education The director has a Bachelor’s Degree or higher and 18 college credits in Child/Youth Development or a related field ⁶	Formal Education The director has a Bachelor’s Degree or higher and 18 college credits in Child/Youth Development or a related field	Formal Education The director has a Bachelor’s Degree or higher and 18 college credits in Child/Youth Development or a related field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College diplomas and transcripts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four-year colleges and universities Credit-bearing coursework offered through community agencies

⁶Specialized coursework in Child/Youth Development or a related field is required. Related fields include Human Development, Psychology, Sociology, Social Work, Education, Pediatric Nursing, Home Economics/Family & Consumer Science, Recreation, and Child and Family Studies.

Standard 8: Program Management

The program comprehensively assesses overall program operations, establishes **program goals to continually improve quality**, and makes progress toward achieving program goals.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four	Level Five	Measurement	Resources
School-age program licensing requires that parents, staff, and other professionals be involved in evaluating the program's effectiveness annually	<p>Professional Development Comprehensive program self-assessment using the <i>RIPQA-Younger Youth Version</i>⁷</p> <p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <p>Quality Improvement Plan Quality improvement plan (to be completed after initial BrightStars rating)</p>	<p>Professional Development Comprehensive program self-assessment using the <i>RIPQA-Younger Youth Version</i>⁷</p> <p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <p>Quality Improvement Plan Quality improvement plan (to be completed after initial BrightStars rating)</p>	<p>Professional Development Comprehensive program self-assessment using the <i>RIPQA-Younger Youth Version</i>⁷</p> <p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <p>Quality Improvement Plan Quality improvement plan (to be completed after initial BrightStars rating)</p>	<p>Professional Development Comprehensive program self-assessment using the <i>RIPQA-Younger Youth Version</i>⁷</p> <p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <p>Quality Improvement Plan Quality improvement plan (to be completed after initial BrightStars rating)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of program self-assessment • Documentation of program quality improvement plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIPQA • PASA • RIASPA • <i>RI After School Quality Standards</i> • SACERS • COA After School Recognition resources • Self-assessment tools

⁷The RIPQA-Younger Youth Version is composed of two separate tools: the School Age Program Quality Assessment (SAPQA), developed by the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, and an administrative component, (Form B), developed locally in Rhode Island.

Glossary

BrightStars Criteria: BrightStars criteria are specific, measurable benchmarks within a standard that programs must meet in order to receive a BrightStars rating. For example, “compliance in all critical areas of DCYF licensing” and “staff-child ratio communicated” are criteria.

BrightStars Domain: BrightStars standards are organized into 6 domains, or general areas of program quality. The 6 BrightStars domains are: 1) child’s daily experience, 2) teaching and learning, 3) staff-child ratio and group size, 4) family communication and involvement, 5) staff qualifications, and 6) program management.

BrightStars Standard: BrightStars program standards set specific goals for program quality. For example, “lead staff qualifications” is a program standard.

Child/Youth Development: Specialized coursework in Child/Youth Development or related field is required. Related fields include Human Development, Psychology, Sociology, Social Work, Education, Pediatric Nursing, Home Economics/Family and Consumer Science, Recreation, and Child and Family Studies.

COA: The Council on Accreditation (COA) partners with human service organizations worldwide to improve service delivery outcomes by developing, applying, and promoting accreditation standards. www.coaafterschool.org

Group Size: Group size is the number of children who occupy a defined space while engaged in a specific activity. Group size will be determined based on the total number of children in a group or activity throughout the observation; intermingling is permitted. Exceptions to group size include: meal/snack time, outdoor time, arrival, departure, and special activities.

Lead Staff: One lead staff must be named for every 26 enrolled children. If the program serves Kindergartners and seeks a rating of 4 or 5 Stars, programs must name one lead staff for every 24 enrolled children.

PASA: The Providence After School Alliance (PASA) works to increase access to quality after school programming for the young people of the city, starting with middle school age youth and now continuing with high school age youth. PASA serves as a vehicle for collective action, advocacy and integrated planning. www.mypasa.org

RIASPA: The Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance (RIASPA) was founded in 2002 by the United Way of Rhode Island, in partnership with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Since its inception RIASPA has worked to envision a Rhode Island that maximizes how, when, and where children and youth learn to ensure their success. To accomplish this goal, RIASPA leads policy, practice, and systems change so that community- and school- based learning and youth development opportunities are aligned for student success. www.afterschoolri.org

RI Afterschool Quality Standards: As an initial step towards quality improvement, PASA convened after-school providers, youth, parents and funders to develop a common definition of quality after-school opportunities. This group identified the most important aspects of quality programs for Providence children and youth. The resulting quality standards for after-school programs were broken into five major categories: 1) Health, safety & environment; 2) Relationships; 3) Programming & activities; 4) Staffing & professional development; 5) Administration.

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Glossary (continued)

RI Child Care Facilities Fund: The RI Child Care Facilities Fund at LISC Rhode Island provides the capital and technical expertise that child care programs need to improve the quality and capacity of their physical space. The Fund provides a combination of training, technical assistance, and flexible, affordable financing.
www.rilisc.org

Rhode Island Core Knowledge and Core Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals: *The Rhode Island Core Competencies* refer to the observable skills and dispositions needed by professionals in order to provide high-quality afterschool and youth development programming. Competencies are concrete, observable and achievable, and establish standards of practice that strengthen the profession.

RI Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF): DCYF licenses child day care centers, family child care homes, and school-age programs to ensure the health, safety and well-being of children while in care outside of their home.
www.dcyf.ri.gov

RIPQA-Younger Youth Version: The RIPQA-Younger Youth Version is composed of two separate tools: the *School Age Program Quality Assessment (SAPQA)*, developed by the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, and an administrative component (Form B) developed locally in Rhode Island.

RISAA: The Rhode Island School-Age Association is the RI Affiliate of the National Afterschool Association. The Rhode Island School-Age Association supports and enhances high-quality school-age child care, youth, and enrichment programs in Rhode Island through public awareness, advocacy, legislation, and education. The Association also provides professional development and networking opportunities.
www.rischoolagechildcare.org

SACERS: The *School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale*. The SACERS assesses quality in school-age classrooms/groups. The SACERS was developed by the FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.
<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/>

Special thanks to United Way of Rhode Island for providing the funding to design and launch BrightStars.

BrightStars Partners:

United Way of Rhode Island

CVS Caremark Charitable Trust

Nellie Mae Education Foundation

The Rhode Island Foundation

BrightStars Steering Committee

Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children

Rhode Island Department of Human Services

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Rhode Island Department of Health

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

BrightStars is managed by the Rhode Island Association
for the Education of Young Children

For more information about BrightStars visit:
www.BrightStars.org

