Measuring Up to Our Ideals

A New Vision for Equitable Quality Measurement

Lydia Carlis, Acelero and Shine Early Learning
Stephanie Curenton, BU Wheelock College
Bridget Hamre, Teachstone
Jennifer Brooks, Consultant (moderator)
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Welcome!

Debi Mathias

Director

ECE Quality Improvement National Learning Network

BUILD Initiative

Chrisanne Gayl

Chief Strategy & Policy Officer

Trust for Learning

As we go:

Please share your **questions** in the **Q&A feature.**

Please share your **comments** in the **chat.**

What are ideal learning environments for young children?

Principles of Ideal Learning

Instruction is personalized to acknowledge each child's unique development and abilities

The teacher is a guide, nurturing presence, and co-constructor of knowledge

Young children and adults learn through relationships

Play is an essential element of young children's learning

The environment is intentionally designed to facilitate exploration, independence, and interaction

Children construct knowledge from diverse experiences to make meaning of the world

Continuous learning environments support adult development

Decision-making reflects a commitment to equity

The time of childhood is valued

Resources

Evidence Brief – Ideal Learning Environments for Young Children

Ideal Pathways
How Ideal Learning Approaches Prepare and Support Early Childhood Educators

Trust for Learning
Ideal learning made real for all

Children are born learning, exploring and growing.

How they will develop depends on us. We know that during the first few years of life, more than 1 million neural connections are formed every second. Young children develop through rich, daily interactions with nurturing caregivers and educators, building brains and shaping physical, socioemotional and cognitive development for life. These early years represent a unique, flexible period of human development and a finite window for high-impact investment.

Because children are born learning, any environment can become an ideal learning environment

Moderator and Panel

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Senior Impact Advisor
Consultant to Trust for Learning

Lydia Carlis
Chief Program and People
Officer
Acelero and Shine Early
Learning

Stephanie Curenton
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Bridget Hamre
Co-Founder
and Chief Executive Officer
Teachstone

Measurement Guide

- **Easy-to-understand publication** that represents the consensus thinking from a workgroup of experts regarding quality measurement for programs serving young children.

- Provides expert insights to support holistic, equity-driven approaches to measuring program quality.

Quality Measures Expert Workgroup

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Michigan State University

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Two Components

First section, *Fundamentals of Quality Measurement,* articulates a vision about the purposes and use of quality measures that is rooted in equity

Second part **identifies specific measurement instruments** that align with elements of each of the principles of ideal learning

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Measuring the Quality of Early Learning Environments
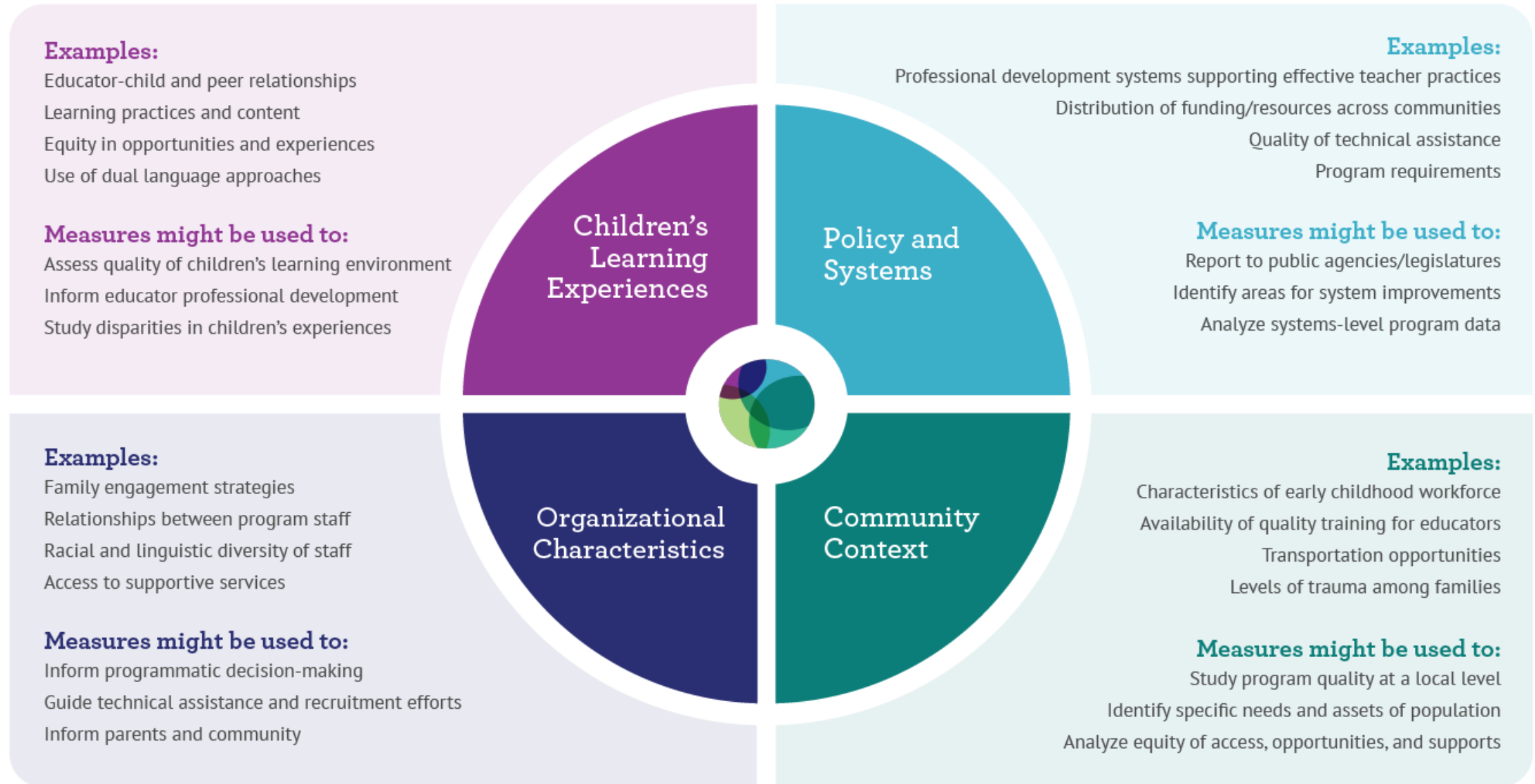
FEBRUARY 2022

A guide to evaluating ideal learning environments for young children

A New Vision for Quality Measurement

What constitutes quality in ECE and how are we holistically measuring it?

Examples:

Educator-child and peer relationships

Learning practices and content

Equity in opportunities and experiences

Use of dual language approaches

Measures might be used to:

Assess quality of children's learning environment

Inform educator professional development

Study disparities in children's experiences

Children's Learning Experiences

Policy and Systems

Examples:

Professional development systems supporting effective teacher practices

Distribution of funding/resources across communities

Quality of technical assistance

Program requirements

Measures might be used to:

Report to public agencies/legislatures

Identify areas for system improvements

Analyze systems-level program data

Examples:

Family engagement strategies

Relationships between program staff

Racial and linguistic diversity of staff

Access to supportive services

Measures might be used to:

Inform programmatic decision-making

Guide technical assistance and recruitment efforts

Inform parents and community

Organizational Characteristics

Community Context

Examples:

Characteristics of early childhood workforce

Availability of quality training for educators

Transportation opportunities

Levels of trauma among families

Measures might be used to:

Study program quality at a local level

Identify specific needs and assets of population

Analyze equity of access, opportunities, and supports

A New Vision for Quality Measurement: Leading with Equity

- Central to the report is the belief that **an early childhood program cannot be considered high-quality without equity of access, experience, and opportunity**, resulting in equitable outcomes for all children and families.

- **Equity must be incorporated into what is measured, how it is measured, and how the data are used.**

Fundamentals

- **Quality measurement should fully incorporate equity considerations**

- **To fully capture quality, measurement must include factors from all levels of the early childhood system**

- Measures should be used in the context of an overall **measurement strategy.**

- Should reflect what children need to thrive **emotionally, socially, physically, and academically.**

- Measurement tools are designed for different purposes, and it is important to use the **right tool for the right purpose**.

- If intended to inform program improvement, measurement tools need to **produce information that is usable**.

What Does this Mean for Policymakers and Educators?

- **What is our vision for quality and how does quality measurement help us to achieve this vision?**
- **Have we proactively centered equity in or approach?**
- **How does quality measurement address the diversity of children and families in our state, community, or program?**
- **Is the training and data collection process adequately funded?**
- **Do providers understand how the measures relate to other quality elements of the system?**
- **Are systems adequately resourced to enable program improvement?**

Questions that policymakers can ask themselves

What is our vision for quality and how does quality measurement help us to achieve this vision?	• What does quality look like in our communities? • Do we hold high standards of quality for all populations of children and families? • How is quality reflected in statutory language or program design and management? • Do we need information to monitor programs, guide technical assistance efforts, or determine which organizations should receive funding? • What measures are designed for these purposes? • If we intend to use the data for accountability purposes — such as for program evaluation or funding decisions — will that affect our ability to use it for other purposes— such as technical assistance?
Have we proactively centered equity in our approach?	• Do our quality measures capture the degree to which providers are working with families from different racial, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds? • How are resources distributed across providers, populations, and communities to meet the needs of racial or linguistic minorities, children with special needs, and families experiencing higher levels of trauma? • Do we use information about the community context and systemic racism when making decisions based on measures of quality?
How does quality measurement address the diversity of children and families in our state, community, or program?	• Are specific measures more effective or appropriate for some groups of children and families than others? • Can these tools be used with key subpopulations (e.g. dual language learners, children with disabilities, children from specific cultural backgrounds, etc.) • Is there a possibility for programs to create local adaptations without sacrificing the commonality of the data?
Is the training and data collection process adequately funded?	• Have we allocated sufficient funding to hire and train data collectors and monitor the effectiveness and implementation of the measures? • If data will be used for accountability, are we confident that it will be sufficiently reliable, valid, and fair for this purpose?
Do providers understand how the measures relate to other quality elements of the system?	• If our agency uses more than one measure of quality, do agency staff, grantees, and providers understand the relationship between them? • Do they understand how the quality tools relate to program standards, early learning standards, and other system elements?
Are systems adequately resourced to enable program improvement?	• Do educators need training, technical assistance or other support to make sense of the data and use it to improve? • Have resources been allocated and are technical assistance activities properly staffed?

MEASURING THE QUALITY OF EARLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

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What Does this Mean for Policymakers and Educators?

- **What is our vision for quality?**
- **How does quality measurement help us to achieve this vision?**
- **Have we proactively centered equity in or approach?**
- **Do staff understand exactly how measurement data will be used?**
- **What resources need to be put in place to ensure the data collected as actionable?**
- **Are these measures burdensome to administer and/or take away from staff's work with children?**

Questions that educators can ask themselves

What is our vision for quality?	• What does quality look like in our community? Who gets a say in that vision? • Do we hold high standards for quality for all populations of children and families? • How does our program reflect the Principles of Ideal Learning? • Do children experience quality equitably?
How does quality measurement help us to achieve this vision?	• Are there measures designed to help inform and achieve our vision? • Are we looking to identify areas for improvement, understand the needs of teaching staff, and/or increase communication with families? • Are there any conflicts associated with using specific tools for various purposes?
Have we proactively centered equity in our approach?	• How have staff and families been engaged in determining how quality will be assessed? • Do measures capture not only levels of quality but variability across populations defined by race, language, culture, or disabilities? • Have we considered what data may be needed to contextualize quality information (e.g. characteristics of children, funding, staff)? • What tools are appropriate for the diversity of staff and families in our program?
Do staff understand exactly how measurement data will be used?	• Have we been transparent about how data will be used and sensitive to concerns about whether the it will be used in a high-stakes manner? • Will staff be engaged in the process of understanding and interpreting data and reflecting on their meaning? • Do supervisors, coaches, and teachers in our program understand how the data generated relate to our curriculum, child assessments, or other measurement tools?
What resources need to be put in place to ensure the data collected are actionable?	• Do staff need support understanding how to make changes in practice in response to the information that is gathered? • Have we allocated sufficient financial and human resources for collecting, analyzing and acting on the data?
Are these measures burdensome to administer and/or take away from staff's work with children?	• Will service to children and families suffer because the measures present too many demands on staff time? • If teachers will be administering the tool, will they need to have additional training or specific skills?

MEASURING THE QUALITY OF EARLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

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Measuring Quality Using the Ideal Learning Framework

Measurement of each of the principles of ideal learning, addressing the questions:

- What indicators would show the principle being implemented in practice?

- What is the current state of the measurement field in capturing these indicators?

- What are some examples of how existing measures address elements of this principle?

Principle 3: Play is an Essential Element of Young Children's Learning

What would indicate that this principle is being used in practice?

Play is essential to children's physical, intellectual, and social development. Overly didactic instruction is both developmentally inappropriate and ineffective for young children. Instead, play is a primary mode of learning — about themselves, the world, and relationships — for young children.

Ideal learning environments recognize, support, and encourage children's playful learning by providing resources and opportunities for children to engage in deep, interactive, and creative play. Teachers facilitate the use of different forms of play, encouraging children to cooperate and communicate as they engage in shared tasks and providing scaffolding as children learn how to resolve conflict. Teachers allow children the time and space to engage in play, capitalizing on opportunities to support concept development, language development, and social skills without interrupting children's activities.

Indicators of this principle in practice might include:

- Learning experiences incorporate play.
- Evidence that children are encouraged to develop and articulate their plans for activities before beginning to play in support of executive function skills.
- Access to outdoor spaces where children have room to incorporate large motor activities, like running and jumping, into their play.
- The availability of diverse toys and resources that children can engage with during and incorporate into their play.
- Educators engage in play with children and facilitate and support play among groups of children.
- Lack of adult interruption of children's play time.
- Promotion of peer communication during play and support for conflict resolution where needed.
- Educators who understand different types of children's play that support growth and learning.
- Playful learning activities and materials are culturally inclusive and support children's play equitably.

Current State of Measurement

Some early childhood measures include items related to play as a part of a more general set of questions about the organization's schedule and routines. For instance, some measures assess whether there are time and resources for outdoor play. There is at least one measure of the degree of maturity in children's play, but this is a measure of children's development aimed at identifying children that may need extra support to develop their play styles more fully (particularly in terms of cooperating with other children).

Some measures include a more detailed analysis of how teachers engage with children and scaffold their learning through play, but these items are less common than measures that simply look at how play factors into routines. Moreover, few measures exist that assess how teachers encourage and promote learning through play in environments other than classrooms, or in mixed-age or infant and toddler programs. Finally, existing measures do not adequately reflect how children's culture, language, or learning differences are addressed in how organizations support or scaffold play.

Illustrative Examples of Existing Measures That Reflect This Principle

The **Classroom Coach**[15] has items that examine the availability of resources to facilitate play both indoors and outdoors, including appropriate outdoor play equipment. It also measures the degree to which those resources are organized and made accessible to children to ensure exploration and to build seamless connections between areas of the classroom. Other items related to play include ways to address conflicts that encourage children to solve relationship problems during their play. Finally, the measure has items that capture the availability of time allowed for children to make their own choices and follow their own intentions with minimal adult interference.

The **Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Well-Being**[16] **(SSTEW)** Scale assesses the teacher's role both in supporting independent play and also engaging in play with children when asked. This tool also considers how educators monitor children's play activities and notice whether concepts presented throughout the day or week are appearing in children's play activities. Items related to social development also consider whether children are encouraged to reach out to adults if peer-to-peer play or sharing begins to break down. Items related to communication assess how well teachers scaffold children to help them extend cooperative play and learning and enhance peer communication.

Measuring Quality Using the Ideal Learning Framework

29 measurement instruments that align with one or more element/s of principles.

- Tools presented are illustrative, not exhaustive, and are not an endorsement by Trust for Learning

- Includes more commonly used classroom assessments (e.g., CLASS, ECERS) and tools that may be less familiar (e.g., ELLCO-DLL, Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES)).

- Despite importance of measuring all levels of the system, most tools emphasize classroom or immediate learning environments.

- Far fewer tools look at the organization as a whole, and even fewer look at broader systems.

Appendix

Measure	Creator/Publisher	Primary use	For which ages/grades of children	For which learning environments	Which levels of quality?	Collection Method	What it measures	More info:	Ideal Learning Principles
ACSES Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale	Dr. Stephanie Curenton	Research	Preschool to 3rd grade	Classroom/Center-based care	Children's Learning Experiences	Observation	Equitable sociocultural interactions with racially minoritized learners (RMLs). 2 subscales: 1) Challenging inequity, which fcuses on equitable learning opportunities, challenging status quo knowledge, and equitable discipline; and 2) Bridging Socialcultural Connections, which focuses on peer collaboration across RMLs and connections to home life	Validity for the Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES) in Early Childhood Classrooms	Principle 1 Principle 2 Principle 4 Principle 5 Principle 6 Principle 9
APECP Assessment Profile for Early Childhood Programs	Dr. Martha Abbott-Shim	Research	3 to 7 years	Classroom/Center-based care	Children's Learning Experiences and Organizational Characteristics	Observation Interview Document Review	Organizational supports, learning environment, and teaching practices for young children. Has 2 parts: 1) Classroom measure, which assesses safety, learning environments, scheduled, curricular methods, interactions an individualization; and 2) Administration measure, which assesses physical facilities, food sevice, program management, personnel, and program development.	Described in National Research Council 2008. Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press	Principle 4 Principle 6 Principle 7
Arnett CIS Arnett Caregiver Interaction Scale	Dr. Jeffrey Arnett	Research	0 to 5 years	Any out-of-home settings	Children's Learning Experiences	Observation	Caregiver's emotional tone, discipline style, and responsiveness of teachers and caregivers. 4 subscales: 1) Sensitivity, 2) Harshness, 3) Detachment, and 4) Permissiveness.	Caregiver Interaction Scale Tool	Principle 6
BEQI Brief Early Childhood Quality Inventory	ECD Measure	Monitoring, formative assessment, and research	0 to 5 years	Any out-of-home settings	Children's Learning Experiences and Organizational Characteristics	Observation Self-assessement	Play-based learning and interactions between teachers and children. 4 subscales: 1) Play-based learning; 2) Learning through conversations; 3) Promoting strong relationships; and 4) Safe and stimulating environments.	https://www.ecdmeasure.org/beqi/	Principle 2 Principle 3
C-COS The Child-Caregiver Observation System	Boller, K., & Sprachman, S. Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.	Research	1 to 5 years	Any out-of-home settings	Children's Learning Experiences	Observation	Captures Addresse engagem		
CASEBA Classroom Assessment of Supports for Emergent Bilingual Acquisition	Freedson, M., Figueras-Daniel, A., Frede, E., Jung, K & Sideris, J.	Research	Preschool	Classroom/Center-based care	Children's Learning Experiences	Observation	Quality on Dual Gatherin content; emotion		
CHILD Climate for Healthy Interactions for Learning and Development	Dr. Chin R. Reyes	Research and evaluation, professional development	3 to 5 years	Dveloper notes it was created for use in center-based care but has been used in home-based setting	Children's Learning Experiences	Observation	Compreh and emo 1)Transit awarene 8) Indivi behavior		

MEASURING THE QUALITY OF EARLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Information included in the Appendix

- Creator/publisher
- The primary use (e.g., research, coaching)
- Which ages/grades it is relevant for
- Which learning environments it can be used in
- What level of the system it addresses
- What it measures
- Which ideal learning principles it touches on
- Where to find more information about the tool

Highlighted Resources

Evidence Brief – Ideal Learning Environments for Young Children

https://trustforlearning.org/evidence-brief/

Measurement Guide: Evaluating Quality in ECE

https://trustforlearning.org/resource/measuring-the-quality-of-early-learning-environments/

Building Equitable Early Childhood Systems

https://buildinitiative.org/approach/equitable-early-childhood-systems/

www.buildinitiative.org

Search

XChange Community How-Tos

Join the NCIT XChange Community

Need help with a PN-3 challenge?

Submit your request

Or call the dedicated NCIT line

**833.Ask-NCIT
(833-275-6248)**

Join the Discussions

Latest Announcements

New Resources

Welcome to the NCIT XChange Community!

The NCIT XChange was created to provide a dedicated Online Community for prenatal-to-three leaders, advocates, coalitions, consultants, partners, practitioners, providers, and parents…anyone who is a champion for infants and toddlers. Our mission is to build a stronger and more effective prenatal-to-three network through the sharing of knowledge and insights to improve the lives of infants and toddlers and their families.

The XChange community not only provides access to timely and targeted resources, members of the XChange can ask questions of experts and peers, engage in discussions, share insights, and post materials they have found most helpful in their work. Additionally, there are regular announcements of events of interest to the community, job announcements and alerts about new research, legislation, and publications.

My Groups

Authentic Family and Community Engagement

BUILD

BUILD Book Club

Child Care

Communicators

Coordinators

Gerry's Postings

Home-Based Child Care

Hub Leads

**Communities
of Practice**

HUB LEADS

Join the NCIT XChange

On the NCIT XChange, you can:

- Join discussions with peers
- Learn from the experience and expertise of others
- Find timely resources and events
- Share info with the network
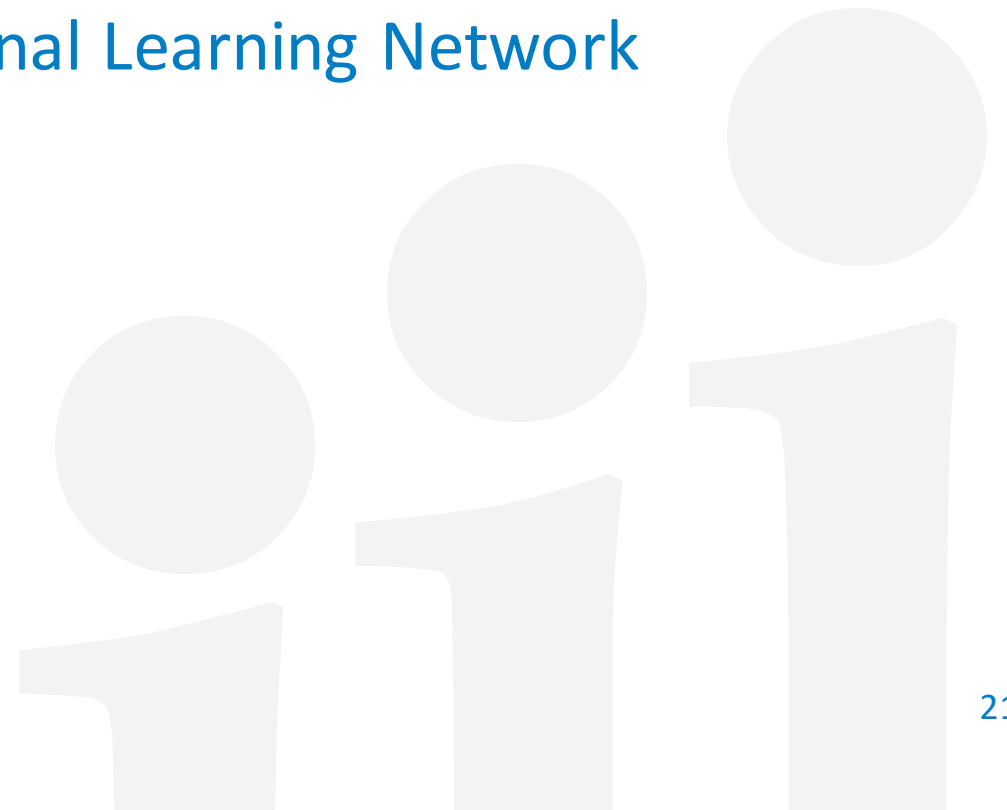- Use the NCIT Hub Help Desk to get expert help
- And more!

Join at https://bit.ly/XChange33122

Thank you!

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Resources Shared in Chat during Webinar

- **IMPACT Measures Tool**
  https://ecmeasures.instituteforchildsuccess.org

- **"Measuring the Quality of Early Learning Environments: Appendix"**
  https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qC-3Ca_VIz0sjmrQMopmiTeL6_09f4hT/view

- **"The Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES)"**
  https://brookespublishing.com/coming-soon-the-assessing-classroom-sociocultural-equity-scale/

- **HOPE (Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences)**
  https://positiveexperience.org/

Resources Shared in Chat during Webinar

- **"Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care"**
  https://www.routledge.com/Beyond-Quality-in-Early-Childhood-Education-and-Care-Languages-of-evaluation/Dahlberg-Moss-Pence/p/book/9780415820226

- **RECE (Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education)**
  https://receinternational.org

- **"QRIS Knock It Down Video Series"**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aB3LjSeVpSw

- **"Measuring the Quality of Teacher–Child Interactions at Scale: Comparing Research-Based and State Observation Approaches"**
  https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0885200618300231

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