



Quality Improvement Systems: Lessons Learned from First 5

Prepared for the First 5
Association of California
and California Children
and Families Foundation



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Introduction

Background

Statewide, county First 5 commissions have invested in numerous strategies to improve the quality and accessibility of early care and education programs. This includes facilities development; supplementing reimbursement rates; funding services for children historically underserved, such as children in foster care; addressing particularly pressing needs, such as lack of infant and toddler care; providing technical assistance to facilitate the licensing process; funding home-based early literacy programs to reinforce children's experience in quality ECE settings; and, most importantly, building a system to connect ECE programs to other public and private services that meet the needs of children and families and recognizes ECE programs as a critical component of an integrated, coordinated system of care.

For purposes of this report, Harder+Company Community Research (Harder+Company) was asked by the First 5 Association of California to conduct a survey addressing the commissions' efforts to implement quality improvement systems for early care and education (ECE) settings. Efforts to improve and expand early care and education have been supported by First 5 county commissions since their inception, and thus, measuring and monitoring ECE quality has been an exhaustive and crucial process in implementing high quality First 5-funded programs. Quality improvement systems (QIS) are also known as quality rating systems (QRS) or quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS). The latter two terms are usually referred to as a more formal, standardized, systematic process of rating early care settings. Since there is not yet a formal statewide system in California, the term QIS was selected for the purpose of this project to more broadly capture the varying degrees of implementation of existing quality improvement systems throughout First 5-funded programs.

Among First 5 commissions there is variation in how quality improvement systems have been implemented, including a formal rating system with stars as indicators of quality and ratings made public; a rating process that is part of an overall First 5 county quarterly monitoring and reporting system; and an informal internal practice that may only focus on a few key ECE elements. Woven throughout the varying degrees of implementation, however is experience and knowledge of the implications of QIS and the infrastructure required to make it happen in a way that takes into consideration funding agencies, administrators, community partners, teachers, families and most importantly, the children.

Over half of the county commissions are funding quality enhancements, which means further improving and raising the standards of existing preschool classrooms. As demonstrated in this report, local First 5 commissions require the highest standards, overall, among agencies that fund and/or administer preschools and other ECE programs, including the California Department of Education, County Offices of Education, Head Start, and School Districts.

The most important lesson learned from county commission experience with quality improvement in early care settings is that full implementation requires money, time, and staff resources. There is no shortcut. First 5 commissions have utilized their resources to develop infrastructures that incorporate quality assurances, technical assistance from specialists, standardized measures (and re-measures), training and professional development and community outreach and development. This has involved braided funding, alternative and/or unconventional uses of incentives, effective partnerships, and research and evaluation. Additionally, most First 5 commissions fund a mix of diverse early care and education settings, i.e., state preschools, full and part-day state-contracted programs, Head Start, and private ECE center- and home-based programs.

Key Questions

Some of the key questions for this QIS survey project were *what are the implications of implementing QIS in a First 5-funded ECE setting? (What are the lessons learned and notes from the field?) What is a quality “slot”? What is a quality setting?*

Overview of Methods

For this project Harder+Company employed quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyze the data. First an online survey was collaboratively developed with representatives from First 5 county commissions and the First 5 Association of California. The survey contained both closed and open-ended questions. Once the survey was finalized it was launched online utilizing Survey Monkey. Twenty-one county commissions representative of statewide regions and county size, as well as counties that are implementing ECE programs in addition to the Power of Preschool Demonstration sites participated in the QIS survey. All completed the survey. All data were cleaned, organized and summarized using frequencies and means in Excel spreadsheets and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

Additionally, a special full-day convening of the Preschool Learning Exchange, funded by the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, was devoted specifically to addressing early care quality improvement systems. This session was recorded and notes were also taken. Qualitative content analysis was performed on the notes and transcripts and further analyzed with the online survey data.

About this report

The following sections present findings related to key QIS components that are highly important to the implementation of First 5-funded preschools and early care and education programs. These findings include tables with data from the online survey followed by “Lessons Learned” and “Recommendations” that touch directly on likely elements of a statewide Quality Rating or Quality Improvement System. Additionally, the findings were “cross-walked” with two key sets of recommendations relevant to ECE in California and quality improvement systems. We hope by sharing county First 5 commission experience as funders of these efforts, we will contribute to the statewide deliberation of a system that the State of California may one day fund.

ECE Quality Components

First 5 Sets High Standards

Based on the findings, First 5 county commissions require some of the highest standards, overall, among agencies that fund and/or administer ECE programs, including California Department of Education, County Offices of Education, Head Start, and school districts.

The Exhibit 1 below lists the key QIS components described in this document and the percent of respondents who reported them as a requirement of the six listed agencies.

Exhibit 1. Who requires the monitoring of key QIS components?							
	CA Dept. of Education	County Office of Education	State First 5	Local First 5	Head Start/Federal	School District	other
Developmental screening	26%	21%	10.5%	79%	42%	26%	0%
Inclusive and welcoming of children with special needs	0%	5%	0%	71%	5%	5%	13%
Parent/Family engagement	0%	5.6%	0%	67%	5.6	5.6%	11%
Inclusive and welcoming of ELL students	0%	5%	0%	70%	5%	5%	10%
Program director qualifications	41%	27%	9%	68%	46%	32%	4%
Lead teacher qualifications	29%	29%	24%	71%	41%	35%	6%
Assistant teacher qualifications	29%	29%	24%	65%	41%	35%	6%

The table below (Exhibit 2) illustrates the QIS components that First 5 county respondents said were highly important to measure or monitor as a part of their QIS and highly important as good measures of quality early care and education settings.

Exhibit 2. Importance of Components Monitored for QIS

Key QIS Program Components	Percent rated highly important
1. Teacher-child interactions	100%
2. Inclusive and welcoming of special needs children	95%
3. Developmental screenings	95%
4. Inclusive and welcoming of ELL	94%
5. Lead teacher qualifications	90%
6. Parent/family engagement	89.5%
7. Teacher-child ratio	89.5%
8. Health screening	83%
9. Group sizes	74%
10. Kindergarten transition program	67%
11. Assistant teacher qualifications	63%
12. Use of a standard curriculum	44%

Screenings & Inclusion

Key Findings

Exhibit 7. Screening and Inclusion Monitored for QIS	
Screening and Inclusion	Yes, monitored for QIS
Developmental screening	80%
Inclusive and welcoming of children with special needs	83%

Exhibit 8. How would you rate your current system of monitoring or measuring the following?				
Screening and Inclusion	Gold standard/ useful	Adequate	Inadequate/ not useful	Non-existent
Developmental screening	39%	33%	11%	6%
Inclusive and welcoming of children with special needs	28%	61%	0%	6%

Exhibit 9. How would you rate the importance of these QIS components?			
Screening and Inclusion	High	Medium	Low
Developmental screening	94.7%	5%	0%
Inclusive and welcoming of children with special needs	94.4%	5.6%	0%

- Developmental screening practices and inclusion were among the highest rated QIS elements of importance by the First 5 survey respondents.

Lessons Learned

- ECE screening is most effective when it is linked to a greater system of care.** Commissions have been able to include screening and encourage inclusion as part of their QIS efforts in part because the Commissions have already been involved in developing the larger system of care in which these ECE programs are now being embedded. Through their work to support children with special needs, Commissions have become unique brokers – convening the conversations and supporting the connections that make a screening and/or inclusion effort successful.
- The use of the ASQ and the ASQ/ SE screening tool is key to the success of universal screening as part of QIS.** Commissions have mandated the ASQ because 1) it is a formalized process 2) it is easy to train staff and teachers and 3) it is easy to implement. As displayed in Exhibit 2 above,

developmental screenings was the only QIS component that the largest proportion of respondents reported as having a “gold standard” or “useful” system of measurement.

- **Inclusion is a necessary goal for all providers.** Most Commissions identify full inclusion as a goal for all providers, and have structured their programs to ensure that all providers commit to the training necessary to make inclusion possible.
- **Additional resources are necessary to meet inclusion standards.** Once children have been screened and identified as having a problem, additional resources are often necessary in order to follow up with recommendations and to meet standards of inclusion. Among the resources Commissions have supported through additional funding are increased staff, specialists available for providers, and ensuring multiple modalities of professional development.
- **When screening identifies an issue, it is critical to engage the family in addressing it.** One major challenge for ECE teachers after they have completed screening children is connecting families to screening findings, especially when there are language differences, cultural barriers and stigmas. This underscores the importance of linking ECE programs to culturally competent services in the community designed to support young children and families.

Recommendations for screening and inclusion

- **Understand the role of ECE within the larger goal of implementing a complete system of screening.** Developmental screening in ECE programs complements commission efforts to introduce regular screenings -- including screening, referrals, and follow-up -- in pediatrician’s offices and other venues where families receive services.
- **Normalize the use of standard screening protocols.** The ultimate standard should be to “normalize” the use of screening protocols like the ASQ and ASQ – SE in early education settings and educate parents and teachers to expect them to happen and request them if they are not provided.
- **Educate providers in ECE settings on how to engage families with screening findings.** As a part of developing the cultural and linguistic competency of the workforce, it is increasingly important to include protocols on engaging families with ASQ and ASQ-SE findings and recommendations. This is especially important when risk factors or problems are detected.
- **Use a broad definition of special needs, not merely what qualifies a child for an IEP.** It’s important to think of inclusion of children with special needs beyond IEP’s. Some children may not be eligible for mandated services, but do have special needs.
 - Adopt a comprehensive continuum of special needs children – not just the “10%.” Many counties are at 40% due to moderate social/emotional and behavioral problems detected.
 - Implementing universal screening policies and protocols helps people understand this range.
- **Recognize the cost of meeting universal screening and inclusion standards.** Additional resources should be considered in order to meet universal screening and inclusion standards, in particular staffing, professional development and the consideration of differential reimbursement.
- **View inclusion in the context of providing services for all children in the classroom.** Set inclusion a consistent standard: *If a program is a quality ECE program, it provides services for all children in the setting, regardless of their special needs.*

English Language Learners

Key Findings

Exhibit 10. ELL Component Monitored for QIS	
ELL students	Yes, monitored for QIS
Inclusive and welcoming of ELL students	78% (n=18)

Exhibit 11. How would you rate your current system of monitoring or measure the following?				
ELL students	Gold standard/useful	Adequate	Inadequate/ not useful	Non-existent
Inclusive and welcoming of ELL students	24%	53%	6%	17%

Exhibit 12. How would you rate the importance of this QIS component?			
ELL students	High	Medium	Low
Inclusive and welcoming of ELL students	94%	6%	0%

Exhibit 13. What kind of scoring or rating scale is used for the following area?					
ELL students	"yes/no" or checklist	Number rating/ scale	"star" rating	Descriptive scale	other
Inclusive and welcoming of ELL students	19%	38%	5%	40%	25%

Lessons Learned

- **Over 80% of students are English Language Learners (ELL).** In most First 5-funded ECE programs over 80% of students are ELLs. This is a great asset for these programs as well as an opportunity to implement strategies that will help ELLs.
- **Addressing ELLs in ECE settings is resource intensive.** Addressing ELLs in ECE settings is resource intensive and costs real dollars, but is necessary for a quality program.
- **Appropriate support services do not always exist.** Teachers may not have the appropriate cultural and linguistic competency to work with ELLs and require outside resources that are often hard to find.

- **Preschool ELL support cannot be provided in a vacuum.** ELL support must contend with the reality that a large percentage of ELL preschoolers will transition to English-only kindergarten.

Recommendations for ELLs

- **Strive to ensure a diverse workforce.** A diverse workforce can help children in early care and education settings and strengthen the teacher – student relationship. The experience of First 5-funded programs underscores the research showing that children respond better in classrooms where teachers are from their same cultural background.
- **Include a focus on ELL in professional development.** Ensure professional development on dual language acquisition that includes exposure to the scientific evidence regarding the brain development of children learning multiple languages.
- **Frame ELL programming in ECE as development of oral language.** Framing ELL supports as the development of oral language and immersion in language development rather than as an approach for children whose home language is Spanish more appropriately addresses the need across California.
- **Train teachers on cultural responsiveness and cultural competency.** Ensure that teachers are trained in cultural responsiveness and cultural competency so they can understand and work with children of diverse backgrounds in ECE settings. This includes on-going training as needed.

Environment Ratings

Key Findings

Exhibit 14. Environment ratings ,monitored for QIS	
Environment ratings/measurements	Yes, monitored for QIS
ECERS-R	91%
FCCERS- R	67%
ITERS- R	48%
CLASS	38%
ELLCO	10%

Exhibit 15. Ease of implementation for environment rating instruments*			
Environment ratings/measurements	Easy	Moderate	Difficult
DRDP – R	6.7%	86.7	6.7%
ECERS – R	11%	77.8%	11%
FCCERS – R	7.7%	77%	15.4%
ITERS – R	22%	77.8%	0%
CLASS	0%	83.3%	16.7%
ELLCO	0%	100%	0%

Exhibit 16. How would you rate your current system of monitoring or measure the following?				
Environment ratings/measurements	Gold standard/useful	Adequate	Inadequate/ not useful	Non-existent
Environment scales/measurements	33%	61%	0%	0%

Exhibit 17. How would you rate the importance of these QIS components?

Environment ratings/measurements	High	Medium	Low
Environment scales/measurements	79%	21%	0%

Related to measuring the quality of the early care and education or preschool setting is measuring the quality of teacher-child interactions:

Exhibit 18. How would you rate the importance of this QIS component?

Environment ratings/measurements	High	Medium	Low
Teacher child interactions	100%	0%	0%

- Teacher-child interactions was the QIS component with the highest rating of importance by respondents of all the QIS program elements in the survey.

Lessons Learned

- Outside assessors are necessary for valid ECERS scores.** Despite strong resistance from providers, Commissions are requiring external assessors to ensure score validity. Scores completed by external assessors are inevitably 30-50% lower than self-assessments.
- Quality and consistency of external assessors can vary.** A major challenge of third party assessments is maintaining consistency among assessors - even after they have been officially trained. An infrastructure to support checking for inter-rater reliability is necessary.
- ECERS is not enough.** There is a limitation of ECERS in looking at adult - child interactions. ECERS has an emphasis on classroom and program structure and the CLASS instrument articulates teacher-child interaction. In order for early care and education settings to be the highest quality both the environment and adult-child interaction should be monitored for improvement.
- ECERS and CLASS instruments are effective as professional development tools.** In addition to using the instruments to rate the quality of the classrooms and the program, the tools can be broken down and used as professional development teaching tools for classroom teachers.
- It is important to examine the relationship between the outcomes/findings from the environment ratings and similar indicators at the child level.** There are two reasons why this is important. First, it is important to examine the relevancy and validity of some of the components of subscales and indicators to the ECE setting. For example, is the presence of specific equipment equally relevant in a rural versus urban preschool setting, and how might that affect the overall score? Second, it is also important to review whether changes that are being made for program improvement are also being detected at the child level.
- Teachers need time and space to reflect on rating scores.** County commissions strongly believe that it is teacher reflection on the score and the components of the scales and sub-scales that contribute the most to building a quality program.

Recommendations for environment ratings

- **Develop a protocol to check for consistency and reliability of environment ratings conducted by assessors.** Some commissions have a system of randomly selecting assessments for reliability checks or systematically re-assessing every tenth assessment.
- **Link assessments to quality improvement plan.** Both classroom and site level scores are important classroom scores. Many programs have requirements that all classrooms meet the environmental assessment goal to ensure that all ages are served with high quality environments.
- **Utilize ECERS to address structural and classroom issues and CLASS to address teacher-child interactions.** Based on the current First 5 Power of Preschool tiered reimbursement system, utilize ECERS for Tiers 1 (entry) and 2 (advancing) to address structural and classroom issues and add CLASS for Tier 3 (quality) to add the teacher-child interaction dimension.
- **Consider the implementation of a core subset of 12 ECERS indicators for ratings.** Use the entire ECERS instrument as a professional development tool; the 12 core indicators (currently in development in Los Angeles) may be better suited for rating.

Parent Engagement

Key Findings

Exhibit 19. Parent Engagement Monitored for QIS	
Parent engagement	Yes, monitored for QIS
Parent/ Family engagement	87%

Exhibit 20. How would you rate your current system of monitoring or measure the following?				
	Gold standard/useful	Adequate	Inadequate/ not useful	Non-existent
Parent engagement				
Parent/Family engagement	22%	44%	17%	6%

Exhibit 21. How would you rate the importance of this QIS component?			
	High	Medium	Low
Parent engagement			
Parent/ Family engagement	90%	11%	0%

Exhibit 22 What kind of scoring or rating scale is used for the following area?					
	"yes/no" or checklist	Number rating/ scale	"star" rating	Descriptive scale	other
Parent engagement					
Parent/Family engagement	18.2%	36.4%	4.5%	36.4%	22.7%

Lessons Learned

- **Parent engagement works best when strategies include linkages to family supports outside the ECE setting.** Many commissions fund staff time to make ECE programs aware of other resources in the community that serve families whose children are in their program. Commissions have found this strengthens the program's relationship with the parents and the parents' sense of partnership with the program.
- **Parent engagement in an early care setting can prepare parents for lifelong educational advocacy roles.** Parent engagement is best when it addresses both parent education needs and parent advocacy goals.
- **There is a lack of consensus on how to measure parent and family engagement.** There are not many recognized and standardized measures of parent engagement for the early care and education setting.
- **It is useful to rely on a variety of methods to measure and/or observe parent and family engagement.** Currently several commissions employ multiple methods of observing family engagement. Areas of engagement that county commissions have found to be useful indicators are parents' participation in kindergarten-transition activities, parents that seek schools as a source of information, the extent to which parents advocate on behalf of their children, and the frequency of parent-child activities conducted at home.

Recommendations for parent engagement

- **Create and maintain linkages with organizations outside the ECE program that serve (or could serve) families with children enrolled in the program,** By serving as a link to needed services in the greater community, ECE programs can reinforce the trust parents feel for the program and the comfort they feel with the ECE program itself.
- **Agree on family involvement standards.** Use a universal set of standards for family involvement, such as specific constructs addressing family partnerships or family empowerment. This may make it easier for teachers to learn about and practice parent engagement in their ECE settings.
- **Measure parent engagement as a process.** It may be more reasonable to measure parent engagement as a process rather than an outcome. Some commissions include parent engagement in their evaluation plan and use a parent survey with process-type measurements. This makes it easier to link parent engagement to child outcomes in the classroom.
- **Consider utilizing additional support dedicated to parent engagement.** Sites may need additional support dedicated to parent engagement, especially in areas with marginalized families or a larger diversity of families. For example, Head Start programs have additional staff dedicated to parent engagement.

Workforce Development

Key Findings

Exhibit 23. Workforce Components Monitored for QIS	
Workforce components	Yes, monitored for QIS
Program/site director qualifications	79%
Lead teacher qualifications	75%
Assistant teacher qualifications	75%

Exhibit 24. How would you rate your current system of monitoring or measure the following?				
Workforce components	Gold standard/useful	Adequate	Inadequate/ not useful	Non-existent
Program director qualifications	40%	40%	0%	20%
Lead teacher qualifications	33%	50%	0%	17%
Assistant teacher qualifications	26%	47%	0%	26%

Exhibit 25. How would you rate the importance of these QIS components?			
Workforce components	High	Medium	Low
Lead teacher qualifications	89%	11%	0%
Program director qualifications	79%	16%	5%
Assistant teacher qualifications	63%	32%	5%

- 90 percent of survey respondents reported that they have professional development programs in place to specifically support their QIS practices.

Lessons Learned

- The First 5 CARES investment in many counties furthered the goal of workforce development.** CARES has been a major First 5 investment and accomplished much more than the provision of stipends. CARES programs led to new training programs in many counties, commission partnerships with community colleges and 4-year colleges, articulation between ECE programs

and BA programs, support in transferring credits from colleges in other countries, counseling, and coaching.

- **Professional and workforce development is expensive and resource intensive.** There is a high cost to providing quality training and ensuring that teachers get the time necessary to complete their training and professional development. Ongoing coaching and mentoring of staff in the classroom during class time is more expensive than sending teachers to workshops and conferences, but it enables teachers to engage in the learning process and may also be an incentive for site and program directors to participate in a quality improvement system.
- **Financial incentives have resulted in increased professional development.** When programs are reimbursed at a higher rate based on the qualifications of their teachers, they have an incentive to hire more experienced teachers. Similarly, when individual teachers are paid at a higher level based on their level of training, they are highly likely to participate in unit-bearing classes or on-going professional development.
- **Classroom-based coaching ensures professional development focused on areas of greatest need and impact.** Despite much higher costs for classroom-based professional development models, many Commissions have concentrated workforce development resources on developing coaching programs to ensure that teachers are learning the necessary skills for supporting literacy development, social-emotional supports, and inclusion.

Recommendations on Workforce Development

- **Build workforce development on community partnerships as a way to leverage funding for continued workforce and professional development.** Community and four-year colleges provided the link between higher education in early care and child development and the delivery of quality early education. They enable the teaching staff to “move up the permit matrix” which may in turn lead to preschools and other ECE programs reaching higher quality levels. QIS standards for workforce development should be aligned and articulated with ECE college degree programs. This can open the doors to more incentives such as scholarships, education service corps programs and other professional development opportunities.
- **Utilize measurement components of QIS such as DRDP-R, ECERS-R and CLASS as professional development tools.** In addition to the benefits described earlier, doing this demonstrates a link between QIS and quality improvement practices for classroom teachers.

Ratio & Group Size

Key Findings

Exhibit 3. Ratio and Group Size Monitored for QIS	
Yes, monitored for QIS	
Teacher to student ratio	83.3
Maximum allowable number of students per classroom	78.3

Exhibit 4. How would you rate your current system if monitoring or measure the following?				
	Gold standard/useful	Adequate	Inadequate/ not useful	Non-existent
Teacher to student ratio	36.8	47.4	5.3	10.5
Maximum allowable number of students per classroom	26.3	57.9	0	15.8

Exhibit 5. How would you rate the importance of these QIS components?			
	High	Medium	Low
Teacher to student ratio	90.0	10.0	0
Maximum allowable number of students per classroom	75.0	25.0	0

Lessons Learned

- Overall, First 5 County Commissions found that the teacher to student ratio is a better measure and standard than group size for a quality ECE setting.
- Group size requirements in Power of Preschool pilots and other quality improvement efforts have been set to accommodate the existing requirements of different licensing, funding, and accreditation bodies – e.g. CCL, CDE/CDD, Head Start, NAEYC Accreditation. Requirements have also reflected the various age groups being served, including mixed toddler/preschool settings.

Recommendations for group size

- Setting clear standards for teacher to student ratios may be sufficient measures for increasing quality, as long as licensing and other group size requirements are met.

- Maintaining flexibility in group size requirements can encourage and support participation by diverse providers whose funding sources or accreditation requirements often dictate specific group sizes (e.g. Head Start, NAEYC Accreditation).

QIS Policy Implications

The tables below briefly illustrate how First 5 county commissions have, in their work over time, addressed two sets of QIS-related recommendations made by RAND Corporation’s 2009 report on California preschools, *Preschool Adequacy and Efficiency in California: Issues, Policy Options, and Recommendations*, by Lynn Karoly and a RAND 2008 report on QRIS efforts nationwide, *Child-Care Quality Rating and Improvement Systems in Five Pioneer States*. Based on what has been presented in this document, the tables indicate whether and/or how the recommendations are being addressed by First 5 county commissions.

Similar to the recommendations listed below in Exhibit 26, First 5 County Commission respondents have been implementing multi-pronged strategies to implement quality early care and education in their counties.

Exhibit 26. First 5 response to the RAND report’s multi-pronged strategy recommendations

Key elements of multi-pronged strategy to improve quality of early care and education in California	First 5 County Commission Responses				
	No	In progress	Yes	n/a	Comments
1. Measurement of structural and process quality using an effective QRIS with results that are publicly disseminated.		x			Public dissemination of results would only be appropriate after a statewide universal system is established and implemented.
2. Tools for valid and reliable assessment of developmental outcomes to monitor progress at the child level and provide information at the program level for continuous quality improvement.			x		Nearly all First 5 County Commissions with preschool programs utilize the DRDP-R teacher observed child assessment to inform continuous program improvement, often in combination with other tools such as the ECERS-R and CLASS, among others. <i>Please see Lessons Learned and Recommendations for "Environment Ratings," pg. 13 and "Workforce Development," pg. 18</i>
3. Financial incentives to increase quality through a tiered reimbursement system tied to the QRIS.			x		As described earlier in the report, First 5 PoP demonstration sites use a 3-level tiered reimbursement system. Some county commissions have enhanced the tiered reimbursement system at the local level. <i>Please see example of tiered reimbursement, pg. 6 and Lessons Learned and Recommendations for "Workforce Development," pg. 18.</i>

Key elements of multi-pronged strategy to improve quality of early care and education in California	First 5 County Commission Responses				
	No	In progress	Yes	n/a	Comments
4. Technical assistance and other financial supports for programs to plan for, invest in, and achieve higher quality.			x		Over three-quarters of the First 5 County Commission survey respondents reported that they have an internal quality improvement action plan in place. Over 90 percent receive technical assistance from specialists and consultants in order to improve the quality of their ECE settings and programs.
5. Ongoing professional development, supervision and coaching for classroom teachers.			x		As reported earlier, professional development is a major investment for the majority of the county commissions with the recognition that ongoing coaching is expensive, but necessary. <i>Please see Lessons Learned and Recommendations for "Workforce Development," pg. 18</i>
6. A workforce development system, including financial supports, to train new ECE workforce entrants to deliver high-quality early education and to upgrade the skills of the existing workforce.			x		First 5 invested in the CARES program which was primarily implemented as a system of upgrading the skills of both new and existing workforce through stipends and other incentives. <i>Please see Lessons Learned and Recommendations for "Workforce Development," pg. 18</i>
7. Periodic rigorous evaluations at multiple sites to assess the effectiveness of the resources spent.			x		Over 90 percent of county commissions indicated that they implemented evaluation plans. Several counties are implementing more rigorous and complex evaluations such as longitudinal studies with multiple cohorts and multi-year process evaluations.

Like other states in the nation that are implementing QRIS's, First 5 county commissions have incorporated several common QRS elements into their systems. They have also begun to address many of the recommendations listed below for developing and refining QRIS's as demonstrated in the lessons learned and recommendations presented earlier and in the table below.

Exhibit 27. First 5 Responses to RAND Recommendations for Developing and Refining QRIS

RAND Recommendations for Developing and Refining QRISs	First 5 County Commission Responses				
	No	In progress	Yes	n/a	Comments
What should QRISs look like?					
1. Minimize use of self-reported data as part of the QRS		x			Although it is ideal to have independent, third party assessments and ratings as part of a QRS, as reported earlier in the report, county commissions have experienced challenges with the quality and consistency of external assessors. <i>Please see Lessons Learned and Recommendation in "Environment Ratings," pg. 13</i>
2. Licensing should ideally be integrated into the system			x		86 percent of respondents reported that they must be in compliance with CCL (Community Care Licensing) as part of their local QIS. State permits are required at each level of the tiered reimbursement system.
3. Use ERSs flexibly by incorporating both self-assessments and independent assessments at different levels of QRS			x		It was recommended that the entire ERS be used as a teaching and reflecting tool and a core set of indicators be used for rating and assessment. <i>Please see Lessons Learned and Recommendations in "Environment Rating," pg. 13.</i>
4. Do not include accreditation as a mandatory component				x	
5. The rating system should have multiple levels			x		As described earlier First 5 Power of Preschool Demonstration sites have been using a three-tiered system. <i>Please see example of tiered reimbursement, pg. 6</i>

RAND Recommendations for Developing and Refining QRISs	First 5 County Commission Responses				
	No	In progress	Yes	n/a	Comments
Quality Improvement					
1. Create a robust QI process.			x		Over three-quarters of the First 5 County Commission survey respondents reported that they have an internal quality improvement action plan in place. Over 90 percent receive technical assistance from specialists and consultants, implement an evaluation plan, and provide professional development in order to improve the quality of their ECE settings and programs. Other quality improvement practices include self-assessments, collecting parent input and third party assessments.
2. Separate raters and QI support personnel	x				
3. Public awareness campaigns are important but should start after the system is in place; these campaigns need to be ongoing.		x			As described above in the multi-pronged system recommendation, public dissemination of results would only be appropriate after a statewide universal system is established and implemented.
Evaluate the effectiveness of QRIS					
1. Support research on systems and system components.			x		As described earlier, several counties are implementing more rigorous and complex evaluations such as longitudinal studies with multiple cohorts, multi-year process evaluations and studies examining the validity of various ECE measures. Some county commissions have also invested in data systems which in order to allow for a more reliable and rigorous evaluation of systems and system components.

