EARLY CHILDHOOD: BLUEPRINT FOR TRANSITIONING QUALITY START TO LETTER GRADES

Unifying Expectations for Louisiana's Children and Providers

From 2015 to 2017, Louisiana will transition Quality Start into the letter grade system required by Act 3.

Current State

- Quality Start is a voluntary program.
- Quality Start uses star ratings instead of letter grades.
- Financial incentives, School Readiness Tax Credits and bonuses, are tied to Quality Start.

Vision for Unified System

- All publicly-funded programs are required to participate in the letter grade system.
- Each publicly-funded provider and each community will receive a letter grade rating.
- Financial incentives are tied to letter grades, starting with the 2017 tax year.

STRATEGIES FOR THE TRANSITION

1. Star ratings earned from January 1, 2014, onward will be automatically extended until June 30, 2017, for Type III early learning centers.
   - *Keeps providers from having to reapply for star ratings during the 2015-16 Letter grade Learning Year; but providers can apply for new or higher stars if they choose*
   - *Providers that are affected will receive a new award letter to reflect this change*
2. The last date for Type III early learning centers to apply for star ratings is February 1, 2016.
   - *No new stars will be awarded after July 1, 2016*
3. All star ratings for Type III early learning centers will expire June 30, 2017. By that point, all Type III centers will receive a letter grade.
   - *SRTC will remain based on star ratings through the 2016 tax year for Type III centers*
   - *Quality Start tiered bonuses will remain based on star ratings through June 30, 2017*
   - Type II centers will not be eligible for School Readiness Tax Credits (SRTC)

KEY THINGS TO KNOW

Continue Quality Improvement

- Providers are encouraged to continue seeking higher stars to benefit from SRTC and bonuses.
- All Type III early learning centers should at least earn 1 star, so teachers benefit from the SRTC

Letter Grade System

- Letter grades will build on the work of Quality Start, basing letter grades on adult-child interactions as measured through CLASS.
- All publicly-funded providers will participate in a learning year in 2015-16 and receive a draft letter grade profile.
  - *No consequences for letter grades in 2015-16*
  - *Providers must participate in 2015-16, or risk losing their Type III license or public funding*

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

- **Apr 2015** — Quality Start application deadline to be eligible for 2015 SRTC
- **Aug 2015** — Letter grade Learning Year begins for all publicly-funded providers
- **Feb 2016** — Last date for Type III centers to apply for new or higher stars
- **Jul 2016** — Last date stars will be awarded in Quality Start
- **Jun 2017** — Type III center star ratings expire