



Civitas
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GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY RATED
PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

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Executive Summary

Introduction

GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students is a nonprofit organization based in Atlanta that is focused on advancing a high-quality early learning system across the state of Georgia. Since its establishment, GEEARS has undertaken a number of efforts to affect statewide change at the community level.

GEEARS' mission is *to support high quality-early learning and healthy development for Georgia's youngest children, from birth to five, by championing policies, promoting innovative and evidence-based practices, and building public will.* GEEARS drives community change by communicating, convening, and collaborating with stakeholders, advocating, and producing research and innovation. As a communicator, convenor, and collaborator, GEEARS educates, informs, and mobilizes the community for collective action and impact to ensure all Georgia families achieve the economic, community, and health benefits of setting a strong foundation prenatally in the first five (5) years of a child's life. GEEARS advocates for effective policies that support access to high-quality early learning and encourage healthy development. GEEARS is also a trusted thought partner that brings the most promising innovations and evidence-based practices and research to the state on behalf of Georgia's youngest children.

Seeing the significant opportunity to improve early learning for all children, but particularly those who are most vulnerable, the WK Kellogg Foundation

provided a two-year grant to support GEEARS' Quality Rated Child Care campaign to increase awareness of, build support for, and encourage engagement in Georgia's Quality Rated Child Care system.

Evaluation Purpose

As the grant entered its second and final year of implementation, GEEARS set out to evaluate the implementation and impact of its Quality Rated public awareness campaign supported by the Kellogg Foundation. Civitas Strategies, a public serving management consultancy, was engaged by GEEARS to conduct an independent evaluation to support GEEARS' learning and improvement. The purpose of this evaluation is to also to identify the lessons learned and best practices that can be highlighted and shared with other states and early childhood systems that are interested in replicating GEEARS' approach and impact.

This formative evaluation finds that the public awareness campaign has made substantial progress in: 1) Building public awareness of the Quality Rated system, especially for providers; 2) Developing research-based messaging for multiple-audiences that effectively speaks to the benefits of quality care for children and families, and the positive impact it has on economic development; 3) Beginning to affect parent behavior as they make child care choices; and 4) Securing important funding that has allowed the blending of public and private resources to improve the likelihood that Quality Rated will be sustained.

A summative evaluation will be conducted and completed in April 2019 and will determine overall effectiveness and impact, as well as capture and

memorialize the campaign's model and method of implementation so that it can be replicated as needed.

Design and Methodology

The formative and summative evaluation will span a total of 13 months and answer key questions regarding the implementation of GEEARS' Quality Rated campaign. These questions include:

- How did the campaign evolve?
- Are there ways to improve implementation to increase effectiveness?
- Did the campaign affect how families inform their decisions on an early learning provider?
- What was the impact on family decision-making as they select an early learning provider?
- Did the campaign affect provider participation in the Quality Rated Child Care System?
- How did the effort change the behaviors of providers in communicating and providing high-quality child care?
- What system-level changes and impacts can be measured or observed?
- What best practices of building public awareness were used throughout the campaign that can be promoted and shared with other early learning systems in other states?
- What is the overall legacy impact of the campaign?
- What is the likely path to and probability of sustainability?
- How could the chances of sustainability be increased?

The evaluation has three phases:

1. An **evaluation plan** (April to May 2018) was designed in partnership with GEEARS, to provide tactical detail on implementation of the evaluation including a work plan.
2. A **formative assessment** (May to August 2018) to assess progress made toward grant goals, lessons learned to date, and ways to improve Year 2 implementation and effectiveness.
3. A **summative assessment** (September 2018 to April 2019) to determine if and how effectively grant goals were met, the overall impact of the effort, and ways to ensure the most impactful work is sustained in the future and what the work might look like beyond the grant. The assessment will also capture and memorialize the campaign's model and method of implementation so that it can be replicated as needed.

Progress to Date

The evaluation plan was completed in May 2018 and is included in this report as Attachment A.

The plan includes:

- A review of the methodology including the questions to be answered.
- A timeline for implementation, reflected in a Gantt chart.
- Data sources for analysis.

The formative assessment was conducted from May to August 2018, culminating in this report.

Formative Assessment

The formative assessment is based upon four types of data:

- **Artifacts** – specifically plans, documents, reports, communication tools, and other products generated by the GEEARS team from the start of the program. The table below lists the key artifacts that were provided by GEEARS to support the formative analysis.
- **Digital Platform User Data** – covering the overall use and specific application of social media sites and websites.
- **Qualitative Interviews** – conducted with members of the GEEARS team, the WK Kellogg Foundation Program Officer and other funders, stakeholders throughout the state, and a selection of ambassadors. In total, 19 interviews were conducted by telephone. (A total of 20 interviews were included in the evaluation plan for the formative assessment; however, one interviewee was unable to be reached after multiple attempts, and will be added

to the summative evaluation list to capture additional perspective).

- **Survey Data** – including an online survey of the ambassadors, as well as a selected group of providers (including those participating in the Quality Rated and those who are not) was conducted. (See below for survey participation rates).

The Civitas Strategies team analyzed the data to generate this report to aid implementation. In September 2018, the Summative Evaluation process will kick off to determine if, and how effectively, the grant goals were met, assess the overall impact of the effort, observe implementation best practices that can be shared with the field, and make recommendations on sustainability beyond the life of the project.

Formative Assessment Survey Participation

Surveys were issued in June and were completed by a total of 255 providers, 98% of whom are participants in Georgia's Quality Rated system. Of the providers who responded that they are quality rated, 63% identified as a child care learning center, and 37% indicated they are a family child care learning home. There was a total of three parent ambassadors who completed the survey to complement the telephone interviews during this formative assessment. During the summative assessment, it will be important to find additional opportunities to connect with parent ambassadors who are willing to share their perspective.

Campaign Overview

Research has shown that high-quality early education correlates with improved educational outcomes and life success, especially for the most vulnerable children. According to seminal research conducted by Professor James Heckman, which is provided as a resource on the GEEARS website, children who are exposed to comprehensive early childhood programs from birth achieve greater economic and social gains in life. Professor Heckman's most recent research, "The Lifecycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program" shows that high-quality birth-to-five programs for disadvantaged children can deliver a 13% per year return on investment, an increase in the previously established return rate of 7-10% for pre-school programs serving 3-4 year olds.¹

Quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) are a powerful lever for improving early childhood education. Starting in the 1990s, these systems establish research-based frameworks to help early learning providers understand the current quality of their services and how to improve over time. Though a QRIS typically focuses on improving provider quality, it also endeavors to use market forces to reinforce progress.

This is achieved by helping parents understand how to identify and select quality providers, thus rewarding child care businesses with additional customers.

Creating this "market for quality" is difficult to achieve in practice and despite many attempts, few QRIS have truly been able to achieve it. Like any market, the question exists of whether you build parent demand first or the supply of providers. This is particularly difficult since building both supply and demand can take a significant amount of time and resources, especially if they are done sequentially.

The state of Georgia is on the vanguard of the quality early childhood education movement. In 1993, the state began to provide free pre-kindergarten statewide utilizing a sustainable funding source – the then-new state lottery. Suddenly, every four-year-old in the state could access and benefit from pre-kindergarten.

In 2012, building on the success of free Pre-K, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning launched Quality Rated, a tiered rating system to improve the quality of providers and also help families easily identify quality through a "star system" (that is, a system where one to three stars are used to designate the level of quality, with one being the lowest and three being the highest).

¹ García, Jorge Luis, James J. Heckman, Duncan Ermini Leaf, and María José Prados. "The Life-cycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program." (2016): n. pag. Web

From the beginning of the Georgia QRIS implementation, GEEARS was a key partner. When GEEARS was established in 2010, its primary charge was to increase the public's awareness and support of early childhood education in Georgia. Their engagement in quality rating intensified a year later when Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) Commissioner Bobby Cagle approached GEEARS Executive Director Mindy Binderman with the to partner in the promotion of high-quality early education. The goal of this promotion was to build public will and support.

The public awareness work began with an initial branding and logo design, facilitated by Jackson Spalding, a marketing communications agency based in Atlanta. The Schapiro Group, an Atlanta-based market research firm, conducted a survey of parents to find out what they knew about childcare, whom they trusted as messengers, and what was important to them in choosing care. Findings from this survey guided the creative development of the campaign and its messaging. Three informal focus groups with parents, providers, and local business partners were also conducted to test the messaging.

When GEEARS was established in 2010, its primary charge was to increase the public's awareness and support of early childhood education in Georgia.

In March 2012, federal funding became available and GEEARS entered into a contract with DECAL to conduct a statewide public education campaign. Federal ARAA funds totaling \$600,000 were used for message development and creative services, as well as for paid advertising and public relations services. Leveraging this infusion of funding, the campaign was developed further during the summer of 2012. Targets were narrowed because funding levels did not allow reach to all Georgia families. The team chose to focus on low to middle income parents of children ages birth to five. They also focused on larger cities for maximum effectiveness. During this time, GEEARS worked with Turner Broadcasting to adjust the campaign's messaging. Through this effort, branded materials for providers were ordered including aprons, key chains, banners, and bumper stickers with the Quality Rated Program.

The implementation of Quality Rated accelerated in 2013 when the state of Georgia was awarded a Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge grant. This grant is part of a highly competitive early learning funding program created by the United States government to catalyze national efforts around quality improvement. In 2014, GEEARS secured another significant investment of \$1 million in the form of in-kind support from the James M. Cox Foundation and Cox Media Group (CMG) Media Properties. This in-kind commitment included television, radio, and print sources.

Another pivotal point in the campaign’s evolution was reached when in 2016, a national communications company, Widmeyer Communications was hired to create the current designs, photography, and promotions for the campaign. This engagement also included building out the Quality Rated website and producing original content. The campaign officially kicked off in mid-April 2016 with the launch of the new website, and the release of print, radio and TV PSAs.

Everywhere Agency, a local Georgia-based communications firm that was engaged in early 2018, is executing the current phase of the campaign. This firm was chosen because of its ability to make personal connections with social influencers in the community and plans to build on the content created during the engagement with Widmeyer Communications.

Since it’s launch, the Quality Rated public awareness campaign led by GEEARS has relied on a number of promotional methods to reach intended audiences. The figure below illustrates the promotion methods used over the course of the campaign.

As this formative evaluation report will discuss, these efforts have resulted in a significant uptake in the number of both child care learning centers and family child care learning home participating in Quality Rated, as well as evidence that the campaign has influenced parent behavior as they choose a child care. While this evaluation does recommend some actions to refine implementation in the final year of the WK Kellogg Foundation grant, by and large, the quality rated campaign is an exemplar that has a great deal of positive lessons learned to offer other states and localities as they pursue similar endeavors.

Figure 1. Promotion Methods Utilized in the Quality Rated Campaign



Observations & Recommendations

During the analysis phase of the formative evaluation, the Civitas Strategies team reviewed all data collected and considered effective approaches and best practices to building early learning quality that have been observed nationally. This analysis led to the identifica-

tion of six observations on campaign implementation that capture the success to date and point out where improvements could be made. Figure 2 lists these observations, which are explored further in subsequent sections, along with associated recommendations.

Figure 2. Formative Evaluation Observations

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1. Aligning public and private leaders has been critical to success.
 2. Building provider supply before parent demand was an important shift.
 3. Providers were initially drawn to Quality Rated by incentives, but they continue to participate because of a desire for further quality improvement.
 4. The campaign appears to have impacted parent behavior.
 5. Data indicates long-term concern about further expansion and maintaining quality.
 6. Private sector partners have played a key role during the initial success of the campaign and will be needed in the near future.

Observation 1: Aligning public and private leaders has been critical to success.

Furthering the Governor's Commitment

The successful uptake of Georgia's Quality Rated system can be traced back to the early and firm commitment from the Governor's office in 1993 to establish free pre-kindergarten funded by the Georgia Lottery for Education. In 2012, Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning launched QRIS system to measure and improve child-care quality. As noted previously, GEEARS was founded in 2010 to help business, civic, and government leaders maximize the economic return on the state's investments. As Georgia's Quality Rated system was being launched, GEEARS raised private funds to leverage the investment made by the state from private sources such as the Cox Media Group. While there were initial challenges with determining how exactly the in-kind commitment would be used (e.g. many television spots were not prime time), GEEARS was able to use this opportunity to think critically about how to use TV as a medium to reach their audiences. It also prompted decision-making around how to use the available in-kind time as creatively and effectively as possible. During this early stage of campaign development, GEEARS was able to make important progress with branding and messaging research, identifying additional sources of funding, and making critical decisions around the overall campaign development.

GEEARS, acting as a third-party non-profit, effectively created the environment to further the governor's initial commitment, while working with the staff of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and other private entities to shape and form the campaign. This is a critical lesson to impart on other systems that are establishing and promoting the uptake of a QRIS. A state that partners with a nonprofit organization like GEEARS can benefit from the engagement of outside and private funding that would be difficult to otherwise access.

In 2013, Georgia won a US Department of Education Race to the Top-Early Learning challenge grant, which bolstered the state funding available for early childhood education through the lottery.



This additional funding supported the incentives that initially drew centers and family child care learning homes providers to become quality rated. For providers who began participation by June 30, 2018, these incentives included Bonus Packages that are based on their star rating. Bonus Packages are fully customizable and include incentives for credentialing, equipment, curriculum, and professional development.

Call to Action

One of the most important values that the Quality Rated public awareness campaign has exhibited is its ability to provide consistent messaging across public and private entities. Some interviewees referred to the consistent messaging as a “script” that helped DECAL, the Child Care Resource & Referral agencies, other participating providers, and parent ambassadors stay “on the

same page” as they connected families with quality rated learning centers and family child care learning homes and encouraged provider participation in the rating system. The Quality Rated Toolkit produced in Spring 2016 supports providers with clear and directive guidelines around how to talk about Quality Rated and includes: the Quality Rated Elevator Pitch, Quality Rated Communication Tips and Opportunities, Quality Rated Q&A, and a Media Outreach Guide. The evaluation survey data also supports this conclusion. When asked about how child care learning centers and family child care learning homes first learned about becoming quality rated, there was a diversity of responses, which indicates that messaging is coming from a variety of different sources.



Visit QualityRated.org | Questions? Call us free at (855) 800-QRIS

HOW TO TALK ABOUT QUALITY RATED

As a Quality Rated provider, we want to ensure that you are prepared to speak about your important work and how it relates to the Quality Rated tool. Below are suggested messages for how to communicate what Quality Rated is, its benefits for children and families, and its benefits to you as a provider. Please feel free to consult this document when speaking with parents, families, community members, reporters, or policymakers, or anyone else who might be seeking additional information on Quality Rated Child Care.

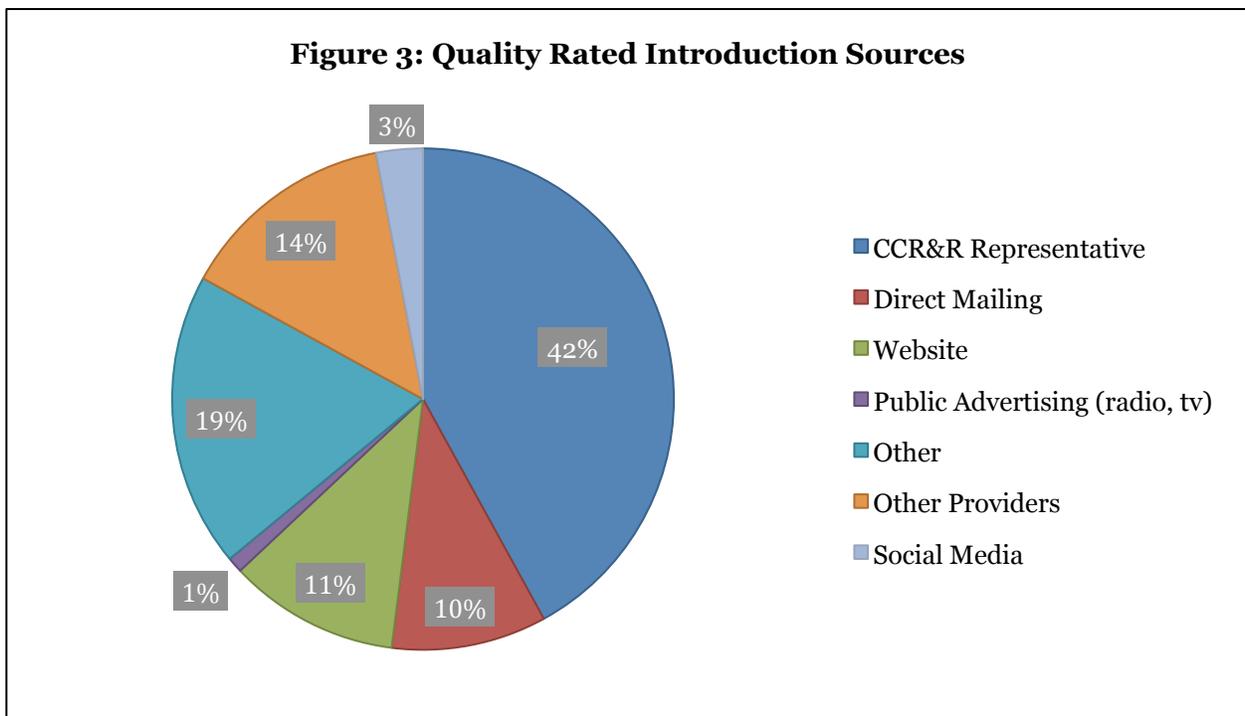
Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of informational sources. The majority of contact was made by child care resource & referral (CCR&R) representatives (42%) while the remaining 58% is broken down across several resources including direct mailing, other providers, the website, social media, public advertising, and other. Responses given to explain the “other” sources include direct emails, LEAP, conference workshops, and Head Start. The diversity of these resources highlights the importance of consistent messaging across entities, especially as all parties prepare for the 2020 deadline to become quality rated.

While interviewees and survey respondents confirmed the consistency of messaging, there were some critical comments on the call to action and its impact on measuring the success of the campaign. The call to action was initially defined as “Choose a quality rated center.” One interviewee noted that if the

campaign had urged people instead to go to the Quality Rated website to find out more and had deliberately directed traffic there from the beginning, it may have been easier to measure the success of the campaign as it evolved. This is a lesson learned that other systems might consider as they launch a QRIS system and build public awareness and support among providers and parents.

Research and Advocacy

The GEEARS public awareness campaign did not just focus on establishing and communicating the Quality Rated system among providers and families. It also effectively promoted research and advocacy among business leaders and local and state elected officials, which has been a critical component of the communication effort.



According to interviewees, throughout the campaign, GEEARS has effectively promoted an understanding of early learning as an economic driver. Conversations referenced the examples of community leaders being impacted by research, articles, and presentations that tie economic development to early learning.

These audiences include mayors, senators, representatives, and chambers of commerce. For example, in 2017, GEEARS and other community partners hosted two Atlanta mayoral forums. One forum for all qualifying candidates took place in October and attracted more than 400 attendees and more than 800 live streams. The second took place in December and was for the two run-off candidates; more than 500 people attended, with more than 1,000 live streams. GEEARS took advantage of this public opportunity by encouraging all candidates to consider Atlanta's youngest children and families in their platforms and future public service plans.

Interviewees also report that GEEARS is very effective at harnessing local data to help these audiences, and especially local officials, understand how early learning has benefited their constituents. As one interviewee stated, "GEEARS has effectively gotten the "right" local data to the state level. Good local data always trumps national data." Another important point that informs GEEARS public advocacy and communications efforts is that early childhood education in Georgia is currently a bipartisan issue. In order to continue to progress and

become entrenched, it is critical that it remain so. GEEARS understands how important it is to continue reaching out to and securing support for early childhood education from both sides of the political aisle.

"GEEARS has effectively gotten the 'right' local data to the state level. Good local data always trumps national data."

Grass Roots and Grass Tops

While GEEARS' messaging has effectively reached the "grass tops" including business leaders and local and state elected officials, GEEARS has concurrently built "grass roots" support. As one interviewee stated, advocacy organizations exist on a continuum. Some organizations prefer to engage a local constituency of deep grass roots individuals who can collectively work to influence decision makers. Other organizations shy away from that model, as it tends to require heavy resources, and opt instead to focus on leaders or "grass tops." Then there are organizations like GEEARS that operate in the middle of the continuum. In other words, GEEARS has been able to strike an effective balance between mobilizing grass roots and engaging important leaders and influencers. Another interviewee reported that GEEARS was able to accomplish this balance because of its common message that quality early childhood drives economic development in both the short and long term, while providing children and families with the early support they need to set them on a path toward healthy, successful, and productive lives.

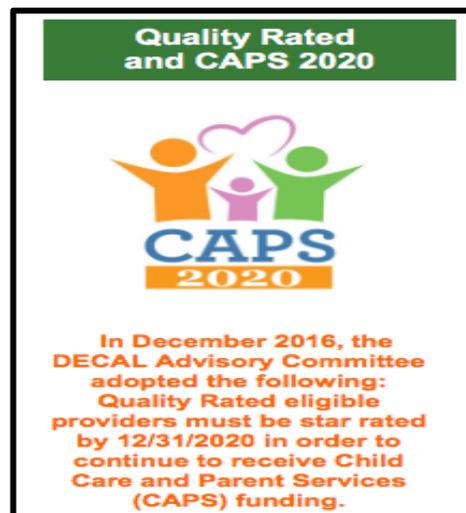


Evidence of this commitment to universally appealing messaging can be found on the GEEARS website on the “Why Early Childhood?” page. This page offers audience-specific messages, resources, and tools for businesses, communities, families, and policy makers, resulting in easily accessible and relevant sources of information.

Recommendation: Stay on track for the 2020 deadline.

As noted earlier in this evaluation, the state of Georgia is preparing for the year 2020, when any provider that accepts CAPS subsidies much be quality rated. Throughout the data collection process, it was reported that many child-care providers, including both centers and family child care learning homes, do not fully believe that the state will follow through with the implementation of this policy. Because of this, continued advocacy by GEEARS is critical, especially through the next gubernatorial transition. Additionally, there is some concern about sustaining the Quality Rated effort

and its associated public awareness campaign, especially if priorities were to shift with a new administration. If the state does scale down its support of Quality Rated, those providers choosing not to become quality rated because they may believe that the 2020 policy will never be implemented will undercut further policy to encourage participation. This will also dishearten currently participating learning centers and family child care learning homes, leading to the exit of a number that are participating in order to be compliant with the new policy.



Observation 2: Building provider supply before parent demand was an important shift.

Shift in Initial Focus

When the campaign began, it initially focused on encouraging parents to choose a quality rated program. Parents were asked if their provider was quality rated with text such as the following that was selected from a brochure that first introduced the Quality Rated system: “If you could prepare your child for a healthier, happier life, would you? Of course you would and *now you can.*” Information was then given about the importance of choosing quality and described the rating characteristics. However, as the campaign team discovered, there were so few programs that were quality rated, demand was being created without the supply to meet it. As one interviewee put it, “You can tell parents in rural Georgia about quality rated, but if there’s only one provider and that provider is full, what’s the point?” Another interviewee observed that GEEARS is a good example of a “learning organization” and is able to effectively “course correct” as needed, as in this case when the need arose to target a new audience. Accordingly, GEEARS shifted focus from building demand from families to building the supply of participating child care learning centers and family child care learning homes. Now that the supply has been established, emphasis has once again been placed back on families, encouraging them to make quality rating a

primary factor in their decision-making.²

These shifts in target audiences resulted in a lesson learned that the campaign could impart to other early learning systems promoting a QRIS. The initial launch of a public awareness campaign should focus on building the supply of rated child-care programs. Once the supply has been initially built, viral marketing efforts can focus on the consumers. If an effort is put into reaching families in the beginning of a campaign, it should be to “prime” them for future messaging and outreach.

Why Quality Rated?

If you could prepare your child for a healthier, happier life, would you?

Of course you would, and now you can.

Children experience their most rapid and significant brain development before they ever walk through the doors of kindergarten, making early education the foundation for a bright future. In fact, research shows that children who enter kindergarten without attending some sort of high quality early education program frequently fall behind.

Early education provides the foundation for success in school, college, career and life.

Quality Rated is Georgia's voluntary, community-powered early education rating system that identifies and rewards early care and education programs exhibiting high merit. A Quality Rated program will set children on solid educational footing by developing skills they will need to succeed in K-12 and beyond, including getting along with others, following directions, and preparing them for reading and math.

Similar to rating systems for other service industries like restaurants and hotels, Quality Rated uses a star rating system to indicate early care and education programs that meet standards exceeding the state's minimum licensing requirements.

The infographic features silhouettes of a woman, a child, and a man walking together, with a yellow bar at the bottom.

² It is important to note that it was reported that the supply of providers is primarily concentrated in the greater Atlanta area and the Early Education Empowerment Zones and that rural areas have yet to experience the built up supply of quality rated programs that other areas have.

National to Local Communications Capacity

As noted earlier in the report, a national communications agency, Widmeyer Communications, was engaged in 2016 to co-design a comprehensive approach to the campaign. This engagement was largely focused on original content design, including the look and feel of the Quality Rated website and all communication vehicles including print, digital, tv, radio, and advertising. Collaborating with this entity was important in the second phase of the effort, in order to quickly build communications focused capacity, set strategy, make important branding decisions, and create original content.

As the campaign moved into the third phase, GEEARS determined that because a supply of quality rated providers had been created, the campaign should more heavily target parents and families, while continuing to spread the message to providers.

Collaborating with this entity was important in the second phase of the effort to quickly build communications focused capacity, set strategy, make important branding decisions, and create original content.

GEEARS understood the need to find a local agency that truly understands the community and landscape and did not require an additional expenditure of resources to learn them. As a result, GEEARS engaged a local marketing and communications firm based in Atlanta, Everywhere Agency, to share previously-created content through key local influencers. The transition to the new agency created a small amount of friction during implementation; however, it was an important step in the renewed effort to reach parents, as the agency is now focused on a dual audience—providers and parents.



Kids are a mystery.
Finding quality child care doesn't have to be.



Try Georgia's online search tool that locates and rates child care programs near you, so you can make the choice that's right for your child—without the mystery. Visit QualityRated.org
Call 877-ALL-GA-KIDS (877-255-4264)

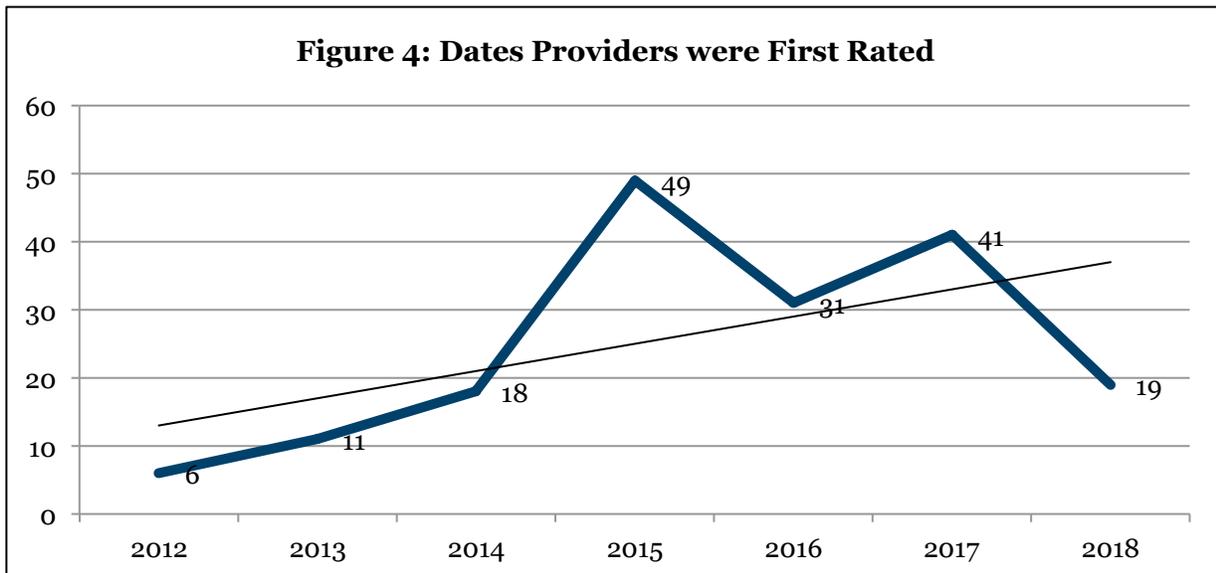
Recommendation: Continue to execute a locally driven approach and ensure that roles, responsibilities, and schedules for social media posting are clear across organizations. This is the sign of an organization that effectively uses emergent strategy and will serve as an example to other systems who want to replicate the campaign. Additionally, there were two key suggestions that were highlighted during the data collection process as the campaign endeavors to build demand for quality among families. The first is to make sure that infor-

mation is presented with adequate visuals and broken into small bits with outsized impact. The second is the importance of making sure that there is a concrete plan of who is creating content and how it is getting shared across the different entities, and establishing clear roles for content creation among the various involved parties. Understanding this plan for delivering content will be an important part of the summative assessment and a critical lesson and process to capture for other systems seeking to replicate this campaign effort.

Observation 3: Providers were initially drawn to Quality Rated by incentives, but they continue to participate because of a desire for further quality improvement.

Based on survey feedback from both child care learning centers and family child care learning homes, initial participation in Quality Rated happened in waves. Of the 180 survey respondents who answered the question asking when they first received their rating, many indicated that they joined as early adopters, with the majority becoming rated between the years of 2015 to 2017. Figure 4 illustrates the frequency at which survey respondents were first rated between the years of 2012-2018. Several interviewees reported that they believe that the incentives offered to providers were critical to motivating early participation.

They argued that increasing quality increases the cost of programs providing care. For both for- and nonprofit providers, the cost of delivering child care is close to what is taken in. In other words, the profit margin is extremely thin. According to a report published by Child Care Aware in 2014, the high costs of child care are the result of what we know are the most effective settings for early learning. “Young children require individualized attention and thrive best in small groups with consistent caregivers and low adult-to-child ratios. Therefore, early learning programs need significantly more staff than other settings for children, such as K-12 classrooms.”³



³ Aware, Child Care. "Parents and the High Cost of Childcare: 2014 Report." Arlington, VA. https://www.ncsl.org/documents/cyf/2014_Parents_and_the_High_Cost_of_Child_Care.pdf

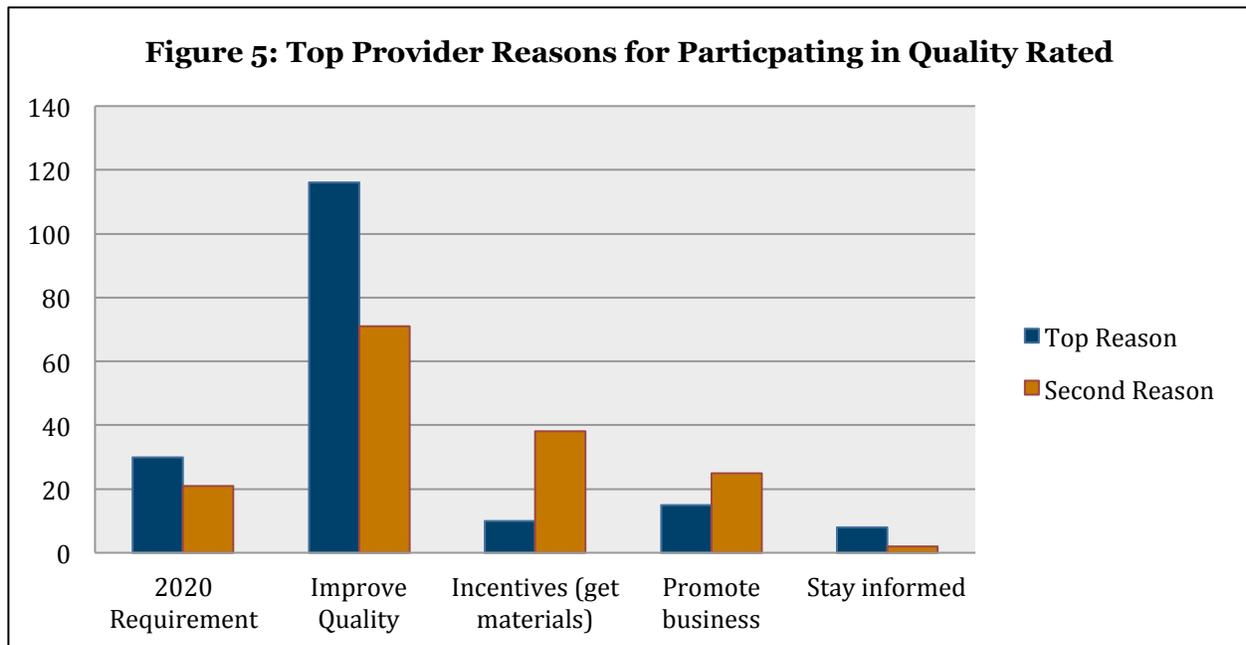
When providers seek to improve programmatic quality, their operation costs rise to meet the more rigorous standards and expectations. Accordingly, incentives or anything that gets programs started on the road to increased quality and reduces the initial costs or mitigates ongoing costs is extremely attractive.

While interviewees affirmed the power of incentives around participation, they also raised the question about how much the idea of improving quality also motivated providers. The figure below illustrates the results from the survey when providers were asked what their top two reasons were for participating in the Quality Rated program.

The survey also asked providers whether or not they believed that being Quality Rated has benefited their program. A total of 71% of respondents feel that it

has benefited them, 11% indicated that it has not benefited them, and 17% said that they didn't know. Examples given to explain the benefits indicate an understanding among providers that they are improving quality to better serve their families, meeting the requirements to continue to receive CAPS, presenting their program in a more professional way that will attract more business, and receiving materials and supplies that can help them get on the road to quality.

Providers were also asked if the quality of their program has improved as a result of participating in Quality Rated. A total of 89% of both child care learning centers and family child care learning homes providers said yes, while only 11% said no. The table below presents a representative sampling of the reasons why respondents responded in the way they did.



Toward the end of the survey, providers were asked what could be done to encourage other providers to participate in the program. A total of 161 providers answered this open-ended question with a response. The table below shows the eight categories of responses that were given. The majority of respondents felt that offering incentives was the best way to encourage other providers to participate. Other popular responses included receiving more information about Quality Rated so that providers could really

understand what it is about and how the process works, as well as providers encouraging other providers to participate. Many respondents who suggested peer support noted that they thought it was important for providers to visit other providers that are participating in Quality Rated, so that they can see for themselves what quality looks like and how it has benefited children, families, and programs.

Table 1 Self-reported Quality Improvement Evidence

Yes (Program Quality has improved)		No (Program quality has not improved)
“I have more learning tools available to me.”	“Being around like minded people and having technical assistance keeps everything moving in a positive direction.”	“Made more work for office staff. Teachers have to be monitored all the time. Turn over is too high.”
“Effective training and implementation of quality care.”	“Accountability for standards.”	“Should not be made to participate in the program to receive CAPS. The standards should be raised for all child-care providers.”
“Additional supplies were provided through the program that we were not financially able to purchase.”	“QR has afforded my teachers many opportunities to participate in quality training.”	
“I am more confident at communicating with parents about their children and Quality Rated. The tier rating allows me to purchase more materials to further my program’s quality (i.e. STEM materials).”	“Staff is more conscious of how to run a classroom and make it a fun, educational, functioning room.”	

While the survey findings indicate that an overwhelming majority of providers can say that participating in Quality Rated has improved the quality of their program, interviewees reported that across the system, there are still many providers that are unable to articulate the specific benefits that contribute to this quality improvement. Additionally, interviewees noted that the current ability for providers to communicate both the importance and benefits of quality care to other providers, as well as in service of their own recruitment efforts, is mixed.

When posed with the survey question about whether or not providers market Quality Rated as part of their recruitment process, a total of 88% indicated that they do. This indicates that phases one and two of the campaign have been successful in motivating and encouraging providers to promote Quality Rated. It also reveals that there is opportunity in phase three to refine the provider message by increasing the number of providers who can clearly understand and articulate the elements that add up to improved quality and how they can be sustained over time. It will be important

during the summative evaluation to continue to ascertain the ability of providers to articulately communicate the components of quality when speaking with parents and each other.

Recommendation: As the campaign progresses into phase three, GEEARS should continue to build provider capacity to clearly articulate the importance of being quality rated. This effort should include both promotion of the program to improve overall quality, and promotion of the specific benefits that comprise programmatic growth. By strengthening this message, GEEARS will enhance the understanding and satisfaction of current participants in Quality Rated, and also strengthen peer-to-peer communications about the program across providers. Additionally, as noted in this section, supply of Quality Rated programming has been primarily built in urban areas and Early Education Empowerment Zones. Building upon the lessons learned in the early phases of the project, the campaign should continue to focus on creating a supply of quality rated providers in rural areas prior to driving parent demand.

Table 2: Encouraging Provider Participation

How might providers be encouraged to participate in QR?	# of Providers
Incentives	43
Receive more information	25
Providers encouraging other providers	24
2020 mandate	16
Offer extra support and help	15
Don't know	15
Streamline the rating process	14
Other	9
Total	161

Observation 4: The campaign appears to have impacted parent behavior.

Parent Decision Making

The primary factors that contribute to the decisions that parents make when choosing care have proven consistent across the country and also hold true in Georgia. A 2013 report issued by Child Trends on the Maryland Child Care Choices Study observed that parents' priorities for selecting their child's primary care arrangement did not vary significantly by child age, but did vary by household income and subsidy receipt. Parent in all income groups cited location, cost, and quality as top priorities, though parents with a household income between 100% and 175% poverty were most likely to cite quality as their primary priority in selecting child care." Therefore, for low-income parents, cost and location tend to be the major drivers of choice. The data collected from interviewees through this evaluation further confirmed this determination. The data collection and analysis process revealed that in Georgia, the drivers of parent decision-making around child care in order of importance are 1) cost; 2) convenience; and 3) the quality of the provider, as reported by friends and family or in-

dicated by the STAR rating or informal assessment. While a program's quality may not be the first criteria that parents use when beginning their search for care, there is evidence that the Quality Rated campaign is making an impact on their decision-making behavior. In other words, considerations of quality are receiving more weight from parents than they did prior to the campaign, as evidenced by increased parent usage of the Quality Rated website. According to interviewees, when searching for potential providers, many parents will initially filter by cost, then location, and then will ultimately select the highest rated in the resulting pool.

According to reports created by Widmeyer during campaign implementation from April 2016 through December 2017, user data indicates that families are using the Quality Rated search tool and are spending more time on the website. When the campaign was first launched in April 2016, a total of 7,610 visits to the quality rated website occurred between April 15th-30th.

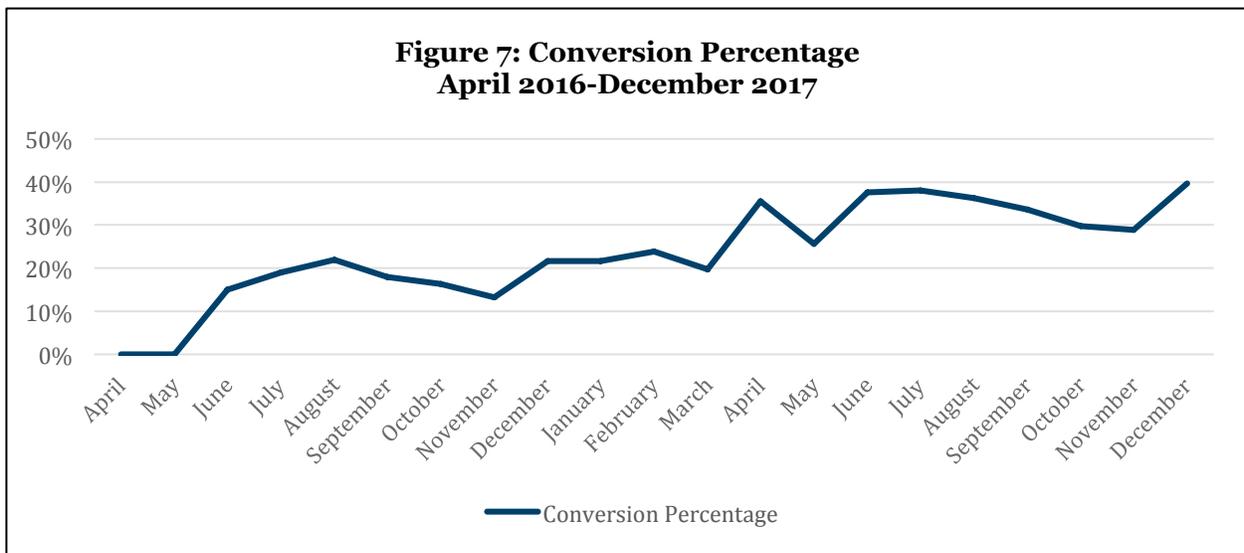


In May and June of 2016, there were a total of 18,228 and 18,742 visits made respectively. Figure 7 illustrates the number of website visits from April 2016 through December 2017.

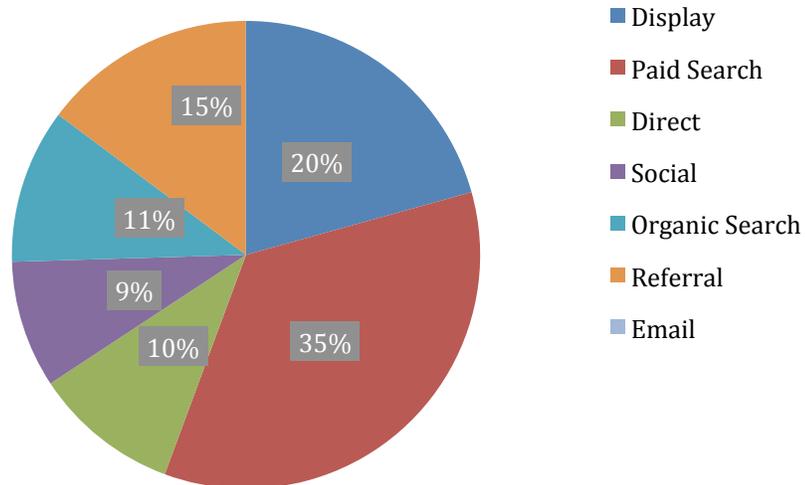
The number of visits to the site fluctuated considerably from its highest peak of 23,232 visitors in August of 2017 to its lowest dip of 5,753 in June of 2017. This variation in the number visits could be attributed to the seasonal nature of child care, which tends to follow the academic calendar. Searching for and securing child care reaches its height in August as parents prepare for the new school year, while in June, parents have already secured their care for the summer and are less likely to be searching for options. As the campaign continued throughout the year, the majority of visitors to the website were new users. In a report issued in December 2017, Widmeyer Communications noted that out of the 9,802 visits to the website that month, 74% of them

were first-time visitors. While the number of visitors may have fluctuated throughout the year, as Figure 7 illustrates that the number of users who clicked on and completed a provider search has risen steadily by 40% since the campaign launch.

Widmeyer Communications also provided the acquisition sources for how visitors got to the website. Figure 8 illustrates the breakdown of these sources which include: Google Display Network Ads (visitors who saw a Quality Rated ad on Google and clicked through to the website), paid search (visitors from AdWords or other paid search engines), Direct (visitors without a traceable referral source), Social (visitors from social media), Organic Search (visitors from a search engine), and Referral (visitors from another website through a link).



**Figure 8: Visitor Acquisition Sources
April 2016-December 2017**



Reaching Parents Early

Throughout the various data collection efforts of this evaluation, it was clear that reaching parents early - before they have formed a relationship with a particular provider, quality rated or not, is critical. This is especially true for first time parents who are more open to suggestions about care options. As one interviewee put it, “Parents don’t want to feel bad about the choices they’ve already made for their children.” Therefore, even if a child is established in a program that is rated lower than other options, the parent is not likely to change the placement based on Quality Rated messaging. During another interview, one parent noted that keeping her child in her previously chosen care setting was important to her even after changing jobs, which made the location of the program less convenient. Reaching parents early and informing them

about the importance of program quality as they are in the initial stage of the decision-making is critical for providers to understand. According to the survey, most families are not asking about quality ratings on their own, as 55% of the respondents indicated that families rarely or never ask if a program is quality rated. This finding indicates that there is opportunity during the current phase of the campaign to reach these families and educate them about programmatic quality by utilizing providers and parent ambassadors as communication resources.

Reaching parents early and informing them about quality, as they are in the initial process of making care decisions is critical communication that should be offered by the providers.

Kids are
a mystery.

Finding quality
child care
doesn't have
to be.



Try Georgia's online search tool that locates and rates child care programs near you, so you can make the choice that's right for your child—without the mystery.

Visit [QualityRated.org](https://www.QualityRated.org)

Call 877-ALL-GA-KIDS (877-255-4254)

Parent Ambassadors

During the interview process, several interviewees noted that information from a peer is a powerful way to spread the message of quality care. Furthermore, the evidence shows that messaging from a well informed, specifically trained peer can be even more impactful. As one interviewee put it, “Having a peer recommendation is very powerful, much more than a billboard.” As part of the public awareness campaign, the Parent Ambassador model emerged as a way for parents to connect with other parents about the value of finding quality care and provide support during the search process. The Parent Ambassador model came about when a cohort of providers that had gone through the quality rating process together, found that peer-

to-peer assistance was highly effective. This group served as the catalyst for what has now developed into a formal program.

Ambassadors represent Quality Rated in their local community by talking to other parents about Quality Rated Child Care. They also connect with new families who are enrolled in, or thinking about enrolling in a Quality Rated child care program to ensure a smooth transition.

According to Quality Rated Parent Ambassador FAQs, the Parent Ambassador Program “organizes parents and prepares them to be part of the Quality Rated Child Care recruitment team. Ambassadors represent Quality Rated in their local community by talking to other parents about Quality Rated Child Care. They also connect with new families who are enrolled in, or thinking about enrolling in, a Quality Rated child care program to ensure a smooth transition.” In order to become a parent ambassador, parents or primary care givers need to have a child enrolled in a Quality Rated child care program. After completing an application, parent ambassadors participate in a 60-minute training to explain effective messaging protocols and provide them with the resources they need to share information with other parents. There is also a dedicated contact person that parent ambassadors can contact with any questions or requests for support.

There are three activities that Parent Ambassadors are asked to commit to: 1) Follow Quality Rated & Quality Care for Children on Facebook, Twitter, and/or Instagram; 2) Share, re-post, and/or re-tweet Quality Rated content and/or videos to social media platforms minimally once per month; and 3) Attend two community events or meeting per year. Parent ambassadors are compensated for their time as they complete these activities.

While the Parent Ambassador model has clearly provided value to promoting and helping families understand Quality Rated, there were questions raised throughout the data collection process regarding the sustainability and scalabil-

ity of the program. This question will be explored more deeply during the summative evaluation process, as further recommendations are made around sustaining the effort to increase public awareness and support for the Quality Rated program.



Reported Challenges and Opportunities for Progress

While the effort to widely communicate the value of becoming quality rated has made significant progress since the launch of the campaign, there are challenges that continue to impact family decision-making. For many families, especially those who are economically vulnerable, access to quality rated programs remains an issue. While participating in Quality Rated does offer some financial incentives, the commitment to increasing quality tends to increase provider costs, which leads to higher prices, often deterring lower-income families from selecting these programs.

For many lower-income families, it is likely that quality rating will never become their primary factor in choosing care, but it could be a tertiary one.

However, there is evidence that families may still be deterred from selecting higher-rated programs because they still do not fully understand the meaning of the star rating system. Furthermore, there is evidence that some providers share this misunderstanding as well.

For example, they associate a one-star rating as being negative, rather than indicating that the program has gone above the minimum requirements of licensure. The same is true for providers who fear that if they have received only one star that they are perceived as low-quality. One interviewee reported, “It can be difficult to convey this message of what the stars mean. The media, our public relations consultants, and others continually push the explanation of the difference in quality levels in simple terms that parents could understand. Instead, the language around Quality Rated is still filled with too much jargon- we need to strive for simplicity and clarity to ensure that we are delivering a tool that is meaningful to parents and providers.”



Star ratings are based on the following standards. To find the star rating for a Quality Rated program, visit www.QualityRated.org.

One Star: 
Program has demonstrated a commitment to meeting standards that exceed state health and safety requirements, meets several quality thresholds and **scores sufficiently** on an independent observation.

Two Stars: 
Program has demonstrated a commitment to meeting standards that exceed state health and safety requirements, meets many quality thresholds and **scores well** on an independent observation.

Three Stars: 
Program has demonstrated a commitment to meeting standards that exceed state health and safety requirements, meets numerous quality thresholds and **scores high** on an independent observation.

Another challenge noted throughout the interviews is that the signage and materials provided as part of the campaign needs to be user-friendly and realistic. For example, one lesson learned was that providers do not use large Quality Rated banners because they take up too much room and do not fit in program spaces. Now smaller signs are being used and have been well-received. As GEEARS enters a phase of the campaign that is particularly focused on educating parents, it will be important to simplify the messaging language used and ensure it is supported by captivating visuals.

Recommendation: During the current phase of the public awareness campaign, GEEARS should continue to encourage peer-to-peer contact and support, especially through the work with the parent ambassadors. Additionally, the team should carefully consider how they project one-star quality. Unlike other quality rating systems, one-star quality is not low, but rather it is the first tier in a three-tier system. Although the first tier is lower than the third tier, it is still higher quality than the minimum requirement and shows a sincere commitment to programmatic improvement.

Observation 5: Data indicates long-term concern about further expansion and maintaining quality.

Sustaining Quality

Throughout the assessment both child care learning centers and family child care learning homes reported the value and specific benefits of participating in Quality Rated. Both types of providers are well represented among early adopters and new participants. However, there were a number of challenges to sustaining quality noted by both types of providers that should be considered as the campaign promoting Quality Rated progresses.

One such phenomenon and potential challenge to the sustainability of the Quality Rated system is that there are a number of two- and three-star rated providers across the system that are struggling to maintain or improve their quality rating. According to the Quality Rated Validation Study Report #2, issued by Child Trends in March 2018, “less than one-third of 2-star programs increased to a 3-star.” The report goes on to state that they cannot know for sure why this occurred, but it may indicate that the move from 2- to 3- stars is harder than moving among the lower ratings (no stars to 1-star or 1- to 2-stars). Additionally, almost half of 2-star rated programs decreased in their rating, suggesting that programs are having difficulty maintaining rating. According to When interviewees were asked why this phenomenon is occurring, respondents were unclear.

However, it is an important question to answer, in order to protect the long-term sustainability of Quality Rated and support among stakeholder including providers, families, and community and state leaders.

Family Child Care Learning Homes

Concerns about sustaining quality were observed for both child care learning centers and family child care learning homes. While there are many family child care learning homes across the system that are effectively participating in Quality Rated, there were specific comments made about attracting additional providers and the impact on uptake that could result if they resist becoming quality rated. Interviewees reported, “Family providers often feel like outsiders.” It was also reported that family child care learning homes feel that the campaign prioritizes child care learning centers. One interviewee expressed a desire for GEEARS to focus on “educating [parents] on what excellent family child care learning homes look like and how they differ from center-based environments, to battle the misunderstanding how family child care learning homes perceive.”

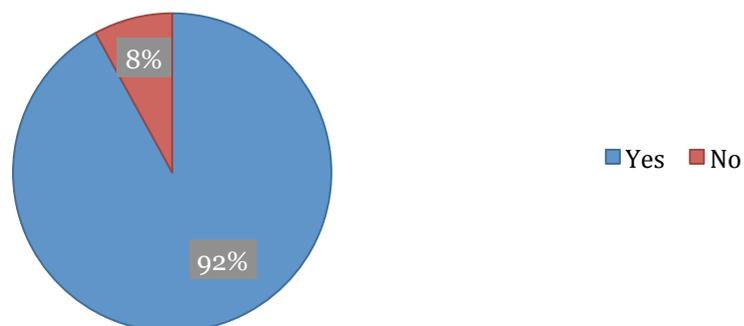
It was reported that family child care learning homes feel that participating in Quality Rated is going to cost them a significant amount of money and transform the way they provide service. For example, one interviewee noted that one of the driving elements of her curriculum is the freedom to experience the world with her children. She cited an instance of observing worms while walking down the sidewalk after a rainstorm, not because it was a planned center activity, but because it was a real world response.

She feared that learning opportunities like this become lost in the rigid structure of a QRIS, leading to the conclusion amongst family child care learning homes that systems do not fully understand the family child care learning homes philosophy or operational realities.

For families who prefer the family child care learning homes setting or are looking for less expensive options than most centers provide, this resistance could curtail the overall impact of Quality Rated.

In other words, the limited participation of family child care learning homes in Quality Rated results in concerns about the supply of an inexpensive child care option. Of the 255 providers that completed the survey, 69 self-identified as family child care learning homes, aligning with the concerns voiced throughout the data collection process regarding the participation level of family child care learning homes. However, when presented with the survey question, “Do you feel that you have improved the quality of your program through your participation in Quality Rated?”, 92% of the family child care learning homes responded yes, while only 8% responded no. Of the 8% that responded no, the majority noted that they felt they were already offering quality before the rating process. Based on this positive response of participating providers, it is clear that participating providers are satisfied with the system and its capacity for helping them to build programmatic quality. As noted earlier in this report, there are specific actions that can be taken to encourage family child care learning homes to participate in Quality Rated, including offering incentives, additional information, and peer-to-peer support and contact.

Figure 9: Family Providers Who Feel they Have Improved the Quality of their Program



Recommendation- Place additional emphasis on reaching out to family providers to welcome them into Quality Rated. GEEARS should consider leveraging the family child care learning homes that are currently participating in the program to share with peers how Quality Rated is benefiting their business. This communication should include both the incentives and disincentives of participation. Additionally, GEEARS should address the question about sustaining quality by examining the providers whose ratings have de-

creased to gain a better understanding as to why this is occurring. Currently, there is quantitative data to suggest a root cause, but qualitative data is needed to pinpoint what supports are needed to remedy the issue. This might include speaking directly with providers whose ratings have either decreased or not progressed to understand their stories. It is critical to be proactive towards finding a solution so that long-term sustainability of Quality Rated and its public perception is protected.

Observation 6: Private-Sector partners played a key role in the initial success of the campaign and will be needed into the near future.

Private and Public Funding

As noted previously in this report, the progress made thus far to build public awareness and support for the Quality Rated movement is a model for other states to look to. One of the most significant factors to past and continued success has been the blending of private and public support facilitated by GEEARS. Looking to the future, interviewees view continued support from private philanthropy as the path to sustainability. At the beginning of the campaign, private funding combined with federal funding (i.e. Race to the Top dollars) was important for providing the provider incentives that accelerated the initial launch and uptake of the system. Additional infusions of funding from private sources, such as the Cox in-kind gift, were particularly important to early stages of the campaign, because the allocations provided the means to focus messaging and ultimately led to decisiveness about how to best communicate the Quality Rated model.

During the interview process, it became clear that continued support from the Atlanta business community is critical for making continued progress toward sustainability. Interviewees emphasized the importance of GEEARS' continued efforts to create a common message that appeals to business and community leaders interested in a significant return on their investment via work force and economic development, as well as furthering the mission of local community

resource organizations. The GEEARS strategy of working to garner support from both grass roots and grass tops offers the most promising chance of sustainability. As one interviewee noted, "When it came to VPK, we had private funders and others helping it through multiple administrations until it could really get entrenched from grass roots to grass tops." Another interviewee pointed out GEEARS' effectiveness at reaching local county officials. "Many parts of Georgia still function on an agricultural system and counties mean something. Advocates in other states should take note of how GEEARS was able to reach across them." While significant progress has been made, thought leaders weighed in that they estimate it will take another 36 months to fully entrench the system and retain its support through the next gubernatorial transition.

Recommendation: Continue to build towards sustainability by engaging both grass roots and grass tops with common messaging that simultaneously speaks to the benefits of quality child care from both a child development perspective, as well as from an economic and workforce development perspective. GEEARS should focus on building the pipeline of support that blends public and private dollars to sustain the campaign and Quality Rated initiative at least over the next 36 months, to strengthen it in the wake of an administration transition.

Conclusion

In conclusion, GEEARS has been highly effective in facilitating an increase in public awareness and support for Quality Rated across diverse audiences, including providers, community stakeholders, business leaders, and families. As the campaign progresses, it will be critical for GEEARS to continue to target these audiences while refocusing on families, so that family demand will

meet provider supply. Based on this formative evaluation, it is clear that the story of Quality Rated is one of success that other states can look to for guidance. The summative evaluation will further illuminate additional understanding and data, but currently, GEEARS is on track to meet the objective of the campaign and the WK Kellogg Foundation grant.

Attachment A: Evaluation Plan

Introduction

GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students is advancing a high-quality early learning system across the state of Georgia. GEEARS is undertaking a number of efforts to affect statewide change at the community level. Seeing the significant opportunity to improve early learning for all children, but particularly those who are most vulnerable, the WK Kellogg Foundation provided a two-year grant to support GEEARS' Quality Rated campaign to increase awareness of, build support for, and encourage engagement in Georgia's Quality Rated Child Care system.

As the GEEARS team enters the second and final year of implementation, they have engaged an evaluator to help them understand the impact of the effort, lessons learned from implementation, and strategies to best sustain their successes into the future.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation will span 13 months and will focus on answering key questions regarding the implementation of GEEARS' Quality Rated campaign:

- How did the campaign evolve?
- Are there ways to improve implementation to increase effectiveness?
- Did the campaign affect how families inform their decisions on an early learning provider?
- What was the impact on family decision-making as they selected an early learning provider?

- Did the campaign affect provider participation in the Quality Rated Child Care System?
- How did the effort change the behaviors of providers in communicating and providing high-quality child care?
- What system-level changes and impacts can be measured or observed?
- What best practices of building public awareness were used throughout the campaign that can be promoted and shared with early learning systems in other states?
- What is the overall legacy impact of the campaign?
- What is the likely path to and probability of sustainability?
- How could the chances of sustainability be increased?

Design and Methodology

The evaluation will analyze both process and outcome measures. Below, the Evaluation Plan table presents the evaluative questions, metrics and sources, methods of analysis, and comparison data and reference points.

The evaluation plan will be implemented in three phases:

1. An **evaluation plan** (April to May 2018) in partnership with GEEARS, to provide tactical detail on implementation of the evaluation including a work plan.

2. A **formative assessment** (May to August 2018) that will assess progress made toward grant goals, lessons learned to date, and ways to improve Year 2 implementation and effectiveness.
3. A **summative assessment** (September 2018 to April 2019) that will determine if and how effectively grant goals were met, the overall impact of the effort, and ways to ensure the most impactful work is sustained in the future. The assessment will also capture and memorialize the campaign's model and method of implementation so that it can be replicated as needed.

Throughout the project, the Civitas Strategies team will be available for monthly or quarterly team calls and meetings and also to provide real-time consultation on key decisions and activities based on the accumulating data from the project to ensure model fidelity and impact and implementing any evaluation recommendations.

Implementation

The evaluation will be implemented from April 2018 through April 2019 in three phases. Each phase and related activities are detailed in the following section, along with dates for deliverables and products from Civitas Strategies.

Phase 1: Evaluation Plan (April to May 2018)

The evaluation will commence on **April 2, 2018**. In this first phase, Civitas Strategies will work in partnership with

the GEEARS team to develop an evaluation plan to guide implementation.

The development process will begin with a draft plan created by the Civitas Strategies team. The draft plan will be reviewed with the GEEARS team in a one and a half hour call. This call will include:

- Review of the overall process and deliverables, including timeline and activities.
- Brief update by the GEEARS team on the current status of implementation.
- Discussion on the plan and any needed revisions.
- Charting of next steps in the process.

After the call, the Civitas Strategies team will submit the final plan to the GEEARS team.

Phase 2: Formative Assessment (May to August 2018)

The purpose of the formative assessment will be to understand progress made toward project deliverables and goals and will include recommendations to improve implementation and effectiveness for Year 2. Civitas Strategies will ensure that the GEEARS team is kept informed and apprised of progress throughout this assessment through weekly updates, monthly team meetings, and ongoing implementation advisement as needed.

The formative assessment will include four types of data:

- Artifacts – specifically plans, documents, reports, communication tools, and other products generated by the GEEARS team from the start of the program.
- Digital Platform User Data – covering the overall use and specific application of social media sites and websites.
- Qualitative Interviews – conducted with members of the GEEARS team, the WK Kellogg Foundation Program Officer and other funders, stakeholders throughout the state, and a selection of ambassadors. In total, 20 interviews will be conducted by telephone.
- Survey Data – including an online survey of the ambassadors, as well as a selected group of 100 providers (including those participating in the Quality Rated Child Care System and those who are not). Additionally, we will consider all existing GEEARS team survey and focus group data.

Civitas Strategies will analyze the data and generate a report for review by the GEEARS team. The report will include an overview of the evaluation methodology; the progress of the program to date; observations on execution; a record of key model elements, organizational readiness factors, and project history; and recommendations to increase the effectiveness of implementation in the remaining time. Civitas Strategies will review the report in a 1.5-hour call with

the GEEARS team to collect feedback, answer questions, and advise on ways to implement recommendations as the program moves forward.

Additionally, Civitas Strategies will create a two- to three-page distillation of the formative assessment for use by GEEARS with system-level leaders and other stakeholders. The distillation will focus only on the key points that are most relevant to these audiences. The document will be formatted for distribution, but will not include the efforts of a graphic designer (though Civitas Strategies will be available to coordinate with a designer of GEEARS' choice if desired).

Phase 3: Summative Assessment (September 2018 to April 2019)

As Year 2 of the program draws to a close, Civitas Strategies will conduct a summative assessment to determine if, and how effectively, the grant goals were met; assess the overall impact of the effort; observe implementation best practices that can be shared with the field; and make recommendations on sustainability beyond the life of the project. The summative assessment will build upon the results of the formative assessment conducted earlier in the year, to illustrate a comprehensive picture of implementation and model fidelity. As with the formative assessment process, Civitas Strategies will provide GEEARS with weekly project updates, participate in a monthly team meeting, and provide as-needed advisement to implement recommendations.

During the summative evaluation process, Civitas Strategies will collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data as an extension of the data collected during the formative phase. The resulting data points will be compared with those previously analyzed to observe results and progress towards ultimate project goals. The data will include:

- Artifacts – specifically plans, documents, reports, communications tools, and other products generated by the GEEARS team from the start of the program;
- User Data – from the various digital platforms and tools such as social media sites and websites, as well as surveys and focus groups already conducted by GEEARS; and
- Qualitative Interviews—with members of the GEEARS team, the WK Kellogg Foundation Program Officer and other funders, stakeholders throughout the state, and a selection of ambassadors. In total, 20 interviews will be conducted by telephone.

Separately, a selection of 10 participating providers and 10 providers not participating in Quality Rated Child Care System will also be interviewed via telephone.

- Online Survey Data – from the all of the ambassadors.
- Parent Focus Groups—There will be a total of six groups distributed across urban, suburban, and rural locations selected in coordination with

GEEARS. The GEEARS team will provide and coordinate a venue for the focus groups.

The Civitas Strategies report will be provided. This report will include:

- An overview of the methodology used;
- A summary of the program including the logic model, how it was implemented over the two years, and a map of the various funding sources and levels (to show support and leveraging efforts);
- An assessment of the impact of the program on families, providers, and system leaders;
- Observations on program implementation;
- The likely pathway and probability of sustaining the program; and
- Recommendations on ways to improve future implementation and ensure a sustained impact of the Foundation’s investment.

Civitas Strategies will review the report in a 1.5-hour call with the GEEARS team to collect feedback, answer questions, and discuss the strategy around future sustainability. A second 1-hour call will be scheduled to provide additional counsel on implementing the recommendations from the assessment.

The Civitas Strategies team will create a two- to three-page distillation of the summative assessment for GEEARS to utilize with system-level leaders and other stakeholders. The distillation will focus only on the key points that are most relevant to these audiences.

The document will be formatted for distribution, but will not include the efforts of a graphic designer (though the Civitas Strategies team will be available to coordinate with a designer of GEEARS’

choice if desired). Additionally, a dissemination plan will be created with the GEEARS team to share the results of the program via formal and informal channels.

Phase 1: Evaluation Plan (April to May 2018)

Activity	Apr	May
Kickoff Call		
Confirm interview list and send documents, reports, communications, and tools used from inception of Program		
Team call to review evaluation plan		
Finalize evaluation plan		

Phase 2: Formative Assessment (May to August 2018)

Activity	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Review digital platform user data covering overall use and specific application of social media sites and websites				
Prepare and develop interview questions				
Schedule interviews				
Conduct interviews				
Develop online survey				
Develop list of survey participants				
Invite participants to complete the survey				
Analyze data collected from surveys and interviews				
Deliver draft formative report				
GEEARS team reviews the draft report and develops feedback				
Review meeting to discuss formative report feedback				
Finalize formative report				
Begin drafting focus group protocol for summative evaluation focus groups				

Civitas Strategies	
GEEARS	
TEAM	

Phase 3: Summative Assessment (September 2018 to April 2019)

Activity	2018				2019			
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Summative evaluation kickoff call (discuss additional data, interview list, focus groups)	TEAM							
Develop and finalize focus group protocol	Civitas Strategies							
Confirm interview list	GEEARS							
Schedule interviews	Civitas Strategies							
Conduct interviewees	Civitas Strategies							
Develop online survey	Civitas Strategies							
Develop list of survey participants	Civitas Strategies							
Invite participants to complete the survey		GEEARS						
Determine parent group participants based on criteria			TEAM					
Invite parents to participate in the parent focus groups				GEEARS				
Host 6 parent focus groups					Civitas Strategies			
Analyze all data collected					Civitas Strategies	Civitas Strategies		
Deliver draft summative report							Civitas Strategies	
GEEARS team reviews the draft report and develops feedback							GEEARS	
Review meeting to discuss formative report feedback							TEAM	
Finalize summative report								Civitas Strategies

Civitas Strategies	Civitas Strategies
GEEARS	GEEARS
TEAM	TEAM

About Civitas Strategies

At Civitas Strategies, we collaborate with both funders and organizations to assess programmatic impact, co-design scaling plans, and evaluate levels of operational efficiency and profitability. Our evaluations are not simple “temperature checks” or compliance measurements. The process is actionable and focused, offering organizations a clear path to operational improvement and greater efficiency beyond the evaluation.

Our team includes:

Gary Romano, President and CEO Civitas Strategies, is an award-winning strategist, author, and advisor for nonprofit leaders and entrepreneurs whose work has helped grow national and regional organizations, move startups to stable state, and bring new ideas to market. He is the published author of two books, *Small But Mighty*, which is helping entrepreneurs to launch and grow nonprofit consultancies, and *Lean Recruitment*, an innovative system to cost-effectively recruit talent. Gary is a SHRM Certified Senior Professional and has a Master’s in Urban Affairs and Planning and a Bachelor’s in Political Science.

Alison LaRocca, Engagement Manager, is an experienced education and management consultant professional who partners with public serving organizations to help them better understand and grow their impact. She is the

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Abby King, Senior Consultant, has 15 years of experience in some of the nation’s most under-resourced areas. She began her career as a Teach for America corps member in New Orleans, where she spent 3 years teaching both general and special education in the early elementary grades. After moving to Boston, she spent four years teaching 4th grade at the award-winning Community Day Prospect Charter School in Lawrence, MA and in 2012 was appointed as founding Head of School for the newly chartered Community Day Gateway, where she served as the instructional and operational director of the school for three years. Abby holds a Masters of Education from Harvard University and a Masters of Art in Teaching from Xavier University of Louisiana, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies from Skidmore College.