

High-Quality Early Learning Programs

DEFINITION

High-quality early learning programs is the percentage of licensed early learning centers, family child care homes, and public schools with preschool classrooms that have a high-quality rating from BrightStars, Rhode Island's Quality Rating and Improvement System for child care and early learning programs.

SIGNIFICANCE

Decades of research show that high-quality early care and education programs can improve children's cognitive and social-emotional development, enabling them to perform better in school. Programs across the U.S. and in Rhode Island vary markedly in quality and can range from rich learning experiences that promote children's development to lower quality settings that can lead to developmental setbacks and contribute to children's behavior problems.^{1,2}

Research has shown that parents strongly prefer high-quality programs and particularly value teachers' educational achievement, however many families cannot afford the cost of higher quality programs and/or don't have enough information about which programs meet recommended quality standards.³

High-quality early care and education programs have qualified educators and low staff turnover, strong staff-child ratios, small class/group sizes, and research-based health, safety,

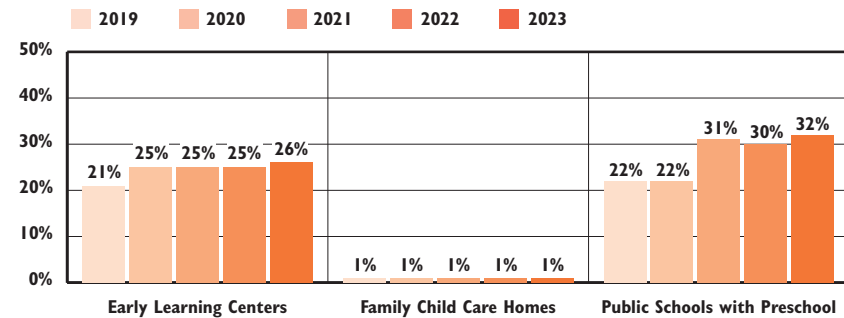
nutrition, and curriculum practices. Consistent caring, supportive, and educational interactions between early childhood educators and children are the critical ingredient to support children's learning and development. The development and retention of a highly qualified and appropriately compensated workforce for early childhood programs is critical to improve program quality.^{4,5,6,7}

Most states use Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) to document and improve the quality of early learning and child care programs. QRIS measure program quality indicators (e.g., staff qualifications, learning environment, and staff-child interactions) and create an index rating. QRIS ratings are shared with parents and often connected to financial incentives and supports (e.g., enhanced reimbursement rates or quality bonuses).^{8,9}

BrightStars is Rhode Island's QRIS and conducts program quality assessments for early care and education centers, family child care homes, and public schools. Programs participating in BrightStars receive a star rating and support to set and achieve quality improvement goals. All programs serving children participating in the Child Care Assistance Program and in RI Pre-K are required to have a BrightStars rating. Star ratings are posted on a public website to inform family decision making when selecting a program.^{10,11}



Percentage of Licensed Early Learning Centers, Family Child Care Programs, and Public Schools with a High-Quality BrightStars Rating (4 or 5 Stars), Rhode Island, 2019-2023



Source: RI Association for the Education of Young Children, Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Rhode Island Department of Education, and RI Early Care and Education Data System (ECEDS), January 2019 – January 2023.

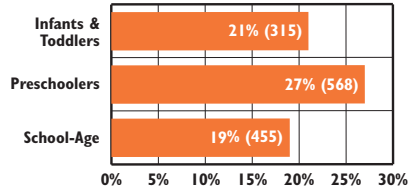
- ◆ As of January 2023, 261 (82%) licensed child care centers, 326 (83%) licensed family child care homes, and 27 (47%) public schools with preschool classrooms had a BrightStars rating. Eighty-four (26%) licensed early learning centers, four (1%) licensed family child care homes, and 18 (32%) public schools had met the benchmarks for a high-quality rating of four or five stars.¹²
- ◆ Since 2019, the percentage of early learning centers with a high-quality rating has grown from 21% to 26% and the percentage of public schools serving preschoolers that have a high-quality rating has increased from 22% to 32%.¹³
- ◆ Early learning centers and public schools in the core cities are more likely to have a high-quality BrightStars rating than those in the remainder of the state (37% vs. 23% for licensed centers and 33% vs. 30% for public schools).¹⁴
- ◆ A 2016 evaluation of BrightStars found that the star levels effectively differentiate quality, and five of the 10 standards are linked to improved child outcomes, specifically improved social competence and math skills. The study also found that 70% of child care center and preschool directors had a positive or extremely positive impression of BrightStars.¹⁵

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Table 36.

Licensed Child Care Centers and Preschools Participating in the BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System, Rhode Island, January 2023

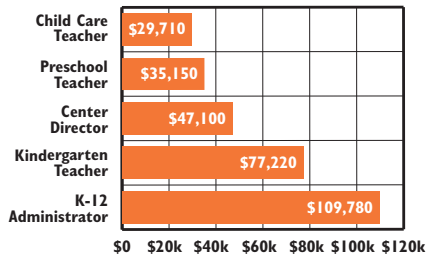
CCAP Children Enrolled in High-Quality Programs (4 or 5 Stars) by Age, December 2022



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, December 2022.

◆ Preschool-age children enrolled in the RI Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) are more likely to be enrolled in a high-quality program (27%) than infants and toddlers (21%) or school-age children (19%).¹⁶

Average Annual Salary, Rhode Island, 2021



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2022). *May 2021 State occupational employment and wage estimates, Rhode Island*. Retrieved April 2, 2022, from www.bls.gov

◆ Early childhood teachers and program directors in Rhode Island earn significantly lower wages than kindergarten teachers and K-12 school administrators.¹⁷

CITY/TOWN	LICENSED PROGRAMS	PROGRAMS THAT ACCEPT CCAP	NO RATING	1 STAR	2 STARS	3 STARS	HIGH-QUALITY		% IN BRIGHTSTARS	% WITH HIGH-QUALITY RATING
							4 STARS	5 STARS		
Barrington	10	3	5	3	1	0	1	0	50%	10%
Bristol	4	3	1	3	0	0	0	0	75%	0%
Burrillville	4	2	1	2	0	0	0	1	75%	25%
Central Falls	3	3	0	0	0	2	1	0	100%	33%
Charlestown	4	3	0	1	0	0	0	3	100%	75%
Coventry	7	7	0	1	2	1	2	1	100%	43%
Cranston	27	18	5	8	7	4	2	1	81%	11%
Cumberland	6	4	2	1	1	0	2	0	67%	33%
East Greenwich	14	7	5	1	3	2	2	1	64%	21%
East Providence	16	10	3	4	5	0	3	1	81%	25%
Exeter	2	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	100%	50%
Foster	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	100%	0%
Glocester	4	3	1	0	2	0	0	1	75%	25%
Hopkinton	3	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	100%	0%
Jamestown	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	100%	0%
Johnston	20	17	2	6	9	1	2	0	90%	10%
Lincoln	5	5	0	1	3	0	0	1	100%	20%
Little Compton	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Middletown	11	5	4	3	0	1	3	0	64%	27%
Narragansett	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	50%	0%
New Shoreham	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Newport	3	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	67%	33%
North Kingstown	7	5	1	0	2	1	3	0	86%	43%
North Providence	9	6	1	3	2	0	1	2	89%	33%
North Smithfield	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Pawtucket	15	10	0	7	2	2	3	1	100%	27%
Portsmouth	5	2	4	1	0	0	0	0	20%	0%
Providence	52	37	8	9	12	6	10	7	85%	33%
Richmond	0	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Scituate	2	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	100%	0%
Smithfield	9	6	1	3	3	1	1	0	89%	11%
South Kingstown	13	8	4	2	1	2	3	1	69%	31%
Tiverton	4	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	75%	25%
Warren	5	2	2	1	0	0	2	0	60%	40%
Warwick	22	18	0	5	6	4	7	0	100%	32%
West Greenwich	3	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	100%	0%
West Warwick	5	4	1	0	1	2	0	1	80%	20%
Westerly	7	5	2	0	2	0	3	0	71%	43%
Woonsocket	12	12	0	2	1	1	3	5	100%	67%
Four Core Cities	82	62	8	18	15	11	17	13	90%	37%
Remainder of State	238	157	51	53	59	21	40	14	79%	23%
Rhode Island	320	219	59	71	74	32	57	27	82%	26%

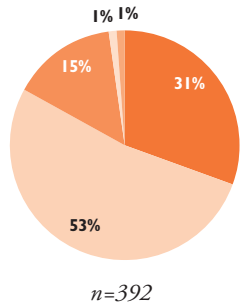
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Table 37.

Licensed Family Child Care Homes Participating in the BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System, Rhode Island, January 2023

Licensed Family Child Care Programs by Preferred Language, Rhode Island, 2023

- 31% (121) ■ English
- 53% (207) ■ Spanish
- 15% (59) ■ Bilingual English/Spanish
- 1% (3) ■ Other
- 1% (2) ■ Missing Information



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Licensed family child care providers, 2023.

◆ In 2023, Of the 392 licensed family child care providers in Rhode Island, 31% spoke English, 53% spoke Spanish, 15% were bilingual in Spanish and English, 1% spoke another language (Portuguese or Creole), and 1% had missing information.¹⁸

◆ As of December 2022, of the 1,589 children in the CCAP program with reported Hispanic ethnicity, 35% were enrolled in family child care, 65% were enrolled in a center, and less than 1% were enrolled in license-exempt care.¹⁹

CITY/TOWN	LICENSED PROGRAMS	PROGRAMS THAT ACCEPT CCAP	NO RATING	1 STAR	2 STARS	3 STARS	HIGH-QUALITY		% IN BRIGHTSTARS	% WITH HIGH-QUALITY RATING
							4 STARS	5 STARS		
Barrington	5	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	40%	0%
Bristol	4	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	50%	0%
Burrillville	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Central Falls	13	13	0	11	2	0	0	0	100%	0%
Charlestown	0	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Coventry	3	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	33%	0%
Cranston	45	34	6	24	15	0	0	0	87%	0%
Cumberland	9	3	6	3	0	0	0	0	33%	0%
East Greenwich	0	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
East Providence	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Exeter	0	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Foster	0	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Glocester	0	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Hopkinton	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Jamestown	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Johnston	9	8	1	6	2	0	0	0	89%	0%
Lincoln	6	1	3	3	0	0	0	0	50%	0%
Little Compton	0	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Middletown	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Narragansett	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
New Shoreham	0	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Newport	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
North Kingstown	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	33%	0%
North Providence	7	6	0	7	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
North Smithfield	4	1	2	1	0	0	1	0	50%	25%
Pawtucket	24	21	1	14	8	1	0	0	96%	0%
Portsmouth	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Providence	228	189	27	118	76	4	2	1	88%	1%
Richmond	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Scituate	0	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Smithfield	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
South Kingstown	4	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	50%	0%
Tiverton	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Warren	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Warwick	5	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	40%	0%
West Greenwich	0	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
West Warwick	4	2	0	4	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Westerly	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Woonsocket	6	5	1	4	1	0	0	0	83%	0%
Four Core Cities	271	228	29	147	87	5	2	1	89%	1%
Remainder of State	121	66	37	65	18	0	1	0	69%	1%
Rhode Island	392	294	66	212	105	5	3	1	83%	1%

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Table 38.

Public Schools with Preschool Classrooms Participating in the BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System, Rhode Island, January 2023

DISTRICT	SCHOOLS WITH PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS	NO RATING	1 STAR	2 STARS	3 STARS	HIGH-QUALITY		% IN BRIGHTSTARS	% WITH HIGH-QUALITY RATING
						4 STARS	5 STARS		
Barrington	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Bristol Warren	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Burrillville	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Central Falls	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	50%	50%
Chariho	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Coventry	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	100%	100%
Cranston	5	2	0	0	0	2	1	60%	60%
Cumberland	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
East Greenwich	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	100%	0%
East Providence	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	100%	100%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	100%	100%
Foster	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Glocester	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Jamestown	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	100%	100%
Johnston	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	100%	100%
Lincoln	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	100%	0%
Little Compton	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Middletown	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Narragansett	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
New Shoreham	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Newport	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
North Kingstown	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	100%	100%
North Providence	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	100%	0%
North Smithfield	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Pawtucket	4	1	1	0	0	0	2	75%	50%
Portsmouth	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	100%	100%
Providence	7	1	0	3	1	1	1	86%	29%
Scituate	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Smithfield	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
South Kingstown	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Tiverton	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Warwick	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
West Warwick	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Westerly	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	100%	100%
Woonsocket	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>0%</i>
<i>RI School for the Deaf</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>67%</i>	<i>33%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>40%</i>	<i>30%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>47%</i>	<i>32%</i>

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data on the number of licensed early learning programs and family child care homes are from the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, January 2023. Data on public schools are from the Rhode Island Department of Education, January 2023. Data on BrightStars quality ratings are from the Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children, January 2023.

High-quality rating means a BrightStars rating of four or five stars.

NA=Not applicable.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

References

- ¹⁴ Donoghue, E. A. & AAP Council on Early Childhood. (2017). Quality early education and child care from birth to kindergarten. *Pediatrics*, 140(2): e20171488.
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- ⁷⁸ Workman, S. & Ullrich, R. (2017). *Quality 101: Identifying the core components of a high-quality early childhood program*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.
- ¹⁰ Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children. (n.d.). *BrightStars RI: Connecting quality child care FAQs*. Retrieved April 2, 2023, from www.brightstars.org
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