

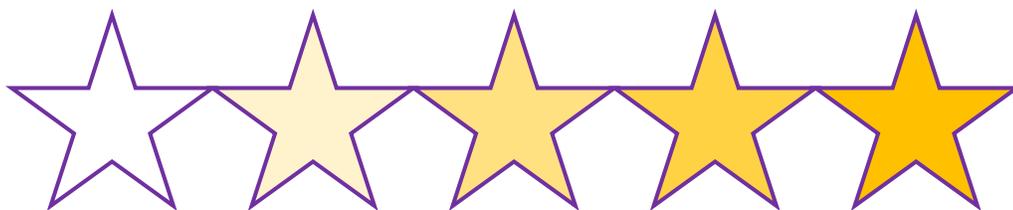
# Pilot Test of the Draft Rhode Island BrightStars School Age Child Care (K-5) Framework

By Kelly Maxwell

FPG Child Development Institute

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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BrightStars is Rhode Island's quality rating and improvement system for child care and early learning programs. Over a two-year statewide planning period funded by United Way of Rhode Island, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT worked with a 30-member steering committee, national and local consultants, and families to draft a comprehensive set of standards and criteria for child care and early learning programs (child care centers/preschools, family child care homes, and school age programs) in Rhode Island. The draft frameworks were intended to reflect the range of quality within all types of care in Rhode Island, establish research-based quality benchmarks, and provide a basis for quality improvement efforts.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT contracted with FPG Child Development Institute (FPG) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) to collaborate with the Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children (RIAEYC) to develop and implement a statewide pilot test of the draft frameworks. The core members of the BrightStars Pilot Test Team were: Kelly Maxwell and Syndee Kraus from FPG, Leanne Barrett from Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, and Tammy Camillo and staff from RIAEYC. This team worked closely to conduct the pilot test. FPG provided guidance, helped develop data collection tools, and analyzed the data. RIAEYC was responsible for recruitment and data collection. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT provided general advice on multiple aspects of the project.

The primary purpose of the pilot test was to use data to review and potentially revise the draft BrightStars standards and criteria before formally implementing BrightStars statewide. For the pilot test, data were collected from a small sample of randomly selected licensed/approved child care centers and preschools, randomly selected licensed family child care homes, and randomly selected licensed school age programs. Findings from the pilot test of centers and preschools as well as family child care have already been reported (Maxwell, 2008; Maxwell, 2009). BrightStars was implemented statewide in licensed/approved child care centers and preschools in January 2009 and in family child care homes in September 2009. This report focuses on the pilot test of **school age child care programs (K-5<sup>th</sup> grade)** in preparation for implementing BrightStars with school age programs in 2011.

### Framework Revisions for Pilot

A multi-step process was used to refine the standards and criteria before collecting data for the pilot test. As a first step, FPG met with the Evaluation Subcommittee of the BrightStars Steering Committee to develop the following guidelines for revising the draft framework:

- Criterion is not covered in licensing/regulations,
- Criterion is based on research regarding high quality care and education, and
- Criterion is feasibly measured by either direct observation or review of program documents.



As a second step, the core pilot test team used the guidelines to reduce the number of criteria and revise the wording, as needed. These revisions were then reviewed and approved by the Evaluation Subcommittee.

The *BrightStars School Age Child Care (K-5) Framework* used in the pilot test contained 25 standards that measured 52 different aspects of quality.

## Measures for the Pilot Test

Five types of data were used for the pilot test:

1. Review of existing program documents
2. Facility observation checklist
3. Provider questionnaire
4. Provider qualifications and professional development form
5. Compliance data from the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)

RIAIEYC also asked for verification of provider qualifications through college transcripts. Copies of the pilot test tools are available from RIAIEYC.

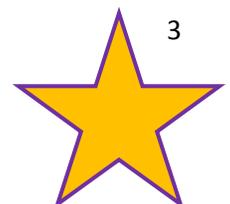
## Pilot Sample

Data were gathered from a sample of 24 randomly selected school age programs. To reach that number, 56 programs were randomly selected from a list of licensed school age programs. Of those, 52 were eligible to participate in the pilot (e.g., were open, had a working phone number). Twenty-four of the 52 program administrators agreed to participate, which represents a response rate of 46%. Most of the pilot data were gathered in September and October of 2008, with some data collected in early June 2008.

Most of the school age programs in the pilot sample were located in Providence County (9), with 6 from Kent County, 4 from Newport County, 3 from Washington County, and 1 from Bristol County. Table 1 provides more information about the characteristics of the 24 school age programs.

**Table 1. Characteristics of School Age Program Pilot Sample**

Characteristic	Percentage of Sample
Accredited by the National Afterschool Association	0%
Not for profit	87%
Accept child care subsidies	87%



The size of school age programs participating in the pilot varied. Nearly half (48%) of the participating programs were licensed to serve between 50 and 100 children, and 40% were licensed to serve fewer than 50 children. The average (mean) number of children enrolled was 33, with a range from 2 to 103. Most of the children enrolled in the pilot school age programs were in kindergarten through fourth-grade, although some programs enrolled children as old as seventh grade. Eighty-five percent or more of the programs served children in grades K-4, 68% served fifth graders, and only 32% served sixth graders.

The characteristics of the sample suggest that the pilot included a range of school age programs. Because of the voluntary nature of this project, it is important to acknowledge that the sample may differ from the general population of licensed school age programs in Rhode Island.

### School Age Child Care Framework Pilot Findings

BrightStars relies on a “building blocks” model for assigning a star rating. Within the building blocks model, a program must meet *all* criteria for Level One to earn a one-star rating. To earn a two-star rating, a program must meet *all* criteria for Level Two.

Using the building blocks model with the original pilot framework from 2007, 37% of school age programs were not eligible for a one-star rating because they were not compliant with critical licensing standards established by the state. The rest of the participating school age programs (63%) received a one-star rating. *It is important to note that the pilot test was a test of the draft school age child care framework, not programs. As such, the findings were interpreted as limitations in the draft framework, not the quality of school age programs.*

### Recommendations Based on the Pilot

The following recommendations are made to the BrightStars Steering Committee, based on the findings of the pilot test.

1. **Determine the standards to include in the final school age child care framework.** The Steering Committee should review the final *BrightStars Child Care Center and Preschool Quality Framework* and determine which of the standards and criteria are applicable to school age programs. Steering committee members will likely need to continue working with leaders from the school age program community as they strive to balance the importance of consistency across frameworks (child care and preschool; family child care; and school age) with the importance of having standards and criteria that are relevant to school age programs.



2. **Determine the approach to measuring observed quality in the framework.** Many of the Rhode Island school age programs use the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA; High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2005) or the Younger Youth Program Quality Assessment (YYPQA; High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2006) as a framework for measuring quality. The YPQA was designed to assess quality in after-school programs serving children in grades 4-12. The YYPQA was designed to assess quality in programs serving children in grades K-6. Because many of the school age programs in RI serve children in grades K-4, the YYPQA is more appropriate than the YPQA. However, the YYPQA is still being developed. Once the YYPQA has been finalized and has data documenting its reliability and validity, it could be the most appropriate tool to include in the framework. Until that tool is ready, the challenge for the BrightStars Steering Committee is to determine how to measure quality in the meantime. Another measure of quality in school age programs is the School Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS; Harms, Jacobs, & White, 1996). The SACERS is the only school age measure of quality currently used in state QRISs. It might be helpful to compare the content of the YYPQA and the SACERS to determine whether the SACERS would be an appropriate observational measure in the short-term.
3. **Use the pilot data to test possible revisions to the framework.** Once a final framework is determined, it is recommended that the BrightStars leadership use the original pilot data to test any further revisions to the *BrightStars School Age Child Care Quality Framework*. Testing possible changes will enable BrightStars to better understand the likely distribution of programs across the full range of star levels before the framework is implemented.

## Future Work

This report is the last in a series of reports describing findings from a pilot test of the BrightStars frameworks before implementing them with child care/preschool, family child care, and school age programs. In addition to these small pilot studies, BrightStars and FPG have worked together to conduct studies of the quality of care statewide in licensed child care and preschool programs and family child care homes. The final quality study of school age child care is scheduled to be completed in 2010. The collective findings from these quality studies will provide useful information to Rhode Island leaders as they make decisions about how best to invest resources to support high quality early care and learning in Rhode Island.



## Other Reports

Harms, T., Jacobs, E. V., & White, D. R. (1996). *School age Care Environment Rating Scale*. New York: Teachers College Press.

High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. (2005). *Youth Program Quality Assessment*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. (2006). *Younger Youth Program Quality Assessment*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

Maxwell, K. L. (December, 2008). *Pilot test of the draft Rhode Island BrightStars child care center and preschool framework*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, FPG Child Development Institute. Available at <http://www.rikidscount.org>

Maxwell, K. L. (July, 2009). *Pilot test of the draft Rhode Island BrightStars family child care framework*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, FPG Child Development Institute. Available at <http://www.rikidscount.org>

