

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 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

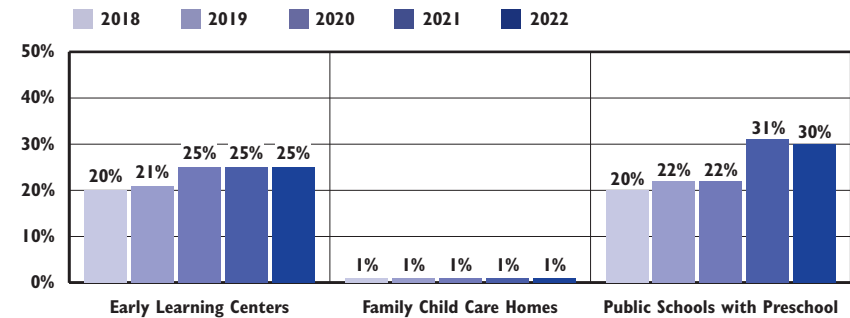
High-quality early care and education programs have qualified educators and low staff turnover, strong staff-child ratios, small class/group sizes, and research-based

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}

Almost all states use Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) to document and improve the quality of early learning and child care programs. QRIS measure a variety of 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 are often connected to financial incentives and supports (e.g., enhanced reimbursement rates or quality bonuses for high quality programs).^{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 the RI Pre-K program 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 Early Learning Centers, Family Child Care Programs, and Public Schools with a High-Quality BrightStars Rating (4 or 5 Stars), Rhode Island, 2018-2022



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 2018 – January 2022.

◆ As of January 2022, 243 (78%) licensed child care centers, 327 (82%) licensed family child care homes, and 28 (49)% public schools with preschool classrooms had a BrightStars rating. Seventy-nine (25%) licensed early learning centers, four (1%) licensed family child care homes, and 17 (30%) public schools had met the benchmarks for a high-quality rating of four or five stars.¹²

◆ Since 2018, the percentage of early learning centers with a high-quality rating has grown from 20% to 25% and the percentage of public schools serving preschoolers that have a high-quality rating has increased from 20% to 30%.¹³

◆ Early learning centers in the core cities are more likely to have a high-quality BrightStars rating than those in the remainder of the state (34% vs. 22%).¹⁴

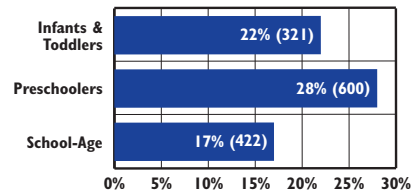
◆ A 2016 evaluation of BrightStars found that the star levels effectively differentiate quality, and five of the 10 standards are linked to improved child outcomes, specifically improved social competence and math skills. The study also found that 70% of child care center and preschool directors had a positive or extremely positive impression of BrightStars.¹⁵

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Table 37.

Licensed Child Care Centers and Preschools Participating in the BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System, Rhode Island, January 2022

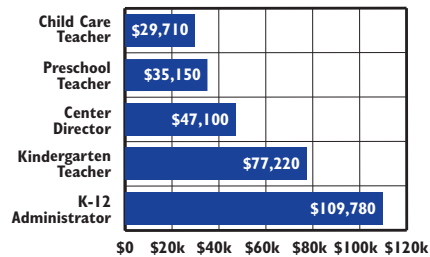
CCAP Children Enrolled in High-Quality Programs (4 or 5 Stars) by Age, December 2021



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, December 2021.

◆ Preschool-age children enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) are more likely to be enrolled in a high-quality program (28%) than infants and toddlers (22%) or school-age children (17%).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

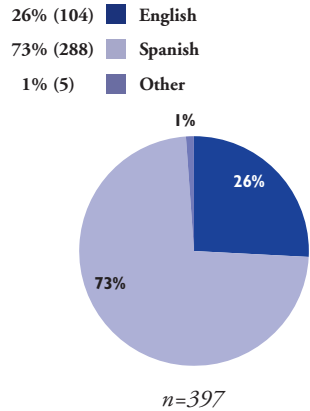
CITY/TOWN	LICENSED PROGRAMS	PROGRAMS THAT ACCEPT CCAP	NO RATING	1 STAR	2 STARS	3 STARS	HIGH-QUALITY		% IN BRIGHTSTARS	% WITH HIGH-QUALITY RATING
							4 STARS	5 STARS		
Barrington	9	3	6	1	1	0	1	0	33%	11%
Bristol	4	3	0	4	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Burrillville	3	3	1	1	0	0	0	1	67%	33%
Central Falls	3	3	0	0	1	1	1	0	100%	33%
Charlestown	4	4	1	0	0	0	1	2	75%	75%
Coventry	7	7	0	1	2	1	3	0	100%	43%
Cranston	28	23	6	7	9	3	2	1	79%	11%
Cumberland	7	5	2	2	1	0	2	0	71%	29%
East Greenwich	12	6	4	2	3	1	2	0	67%	17%
East Providence	15	11	3	3	6	0	2	1	80%	20%
Exeter	2	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	50%	50%
Foster	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	100%	0%
Glocester	3	3	0	1	1	0	0	1	100%	33%
Hopkinton	3	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	100%	0%
Jamestown	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	100%	0%
Johnston	20	18	4	5	9	1	1	0	80%	5%
Lincoln	6	6	1	2	1	0	1	1	83%	33%
Little Compton	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Middletown	10	7	6	1	0	0	3	0	40%	30%
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	8	1	3	2	0	2	1	89%	33%
North Smithfield	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	50%	0%
Pawtucket	12	12	1	6	2	0	2	1	92%	25%
Portsmouth	4	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	25%	0%
Providence	51	42	10	8	13	5	9	6	80%	29%
Richmond	0	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Scituate	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	100%	0%
Smithfield	9	6	3	1	3	1	1	0	67%	11%
South Kingstown	13	8	4	2	1	2	3	1	69%	31%
Tiverton	3	3	0	1	1	0	1	0	100%	33%
Warren	5	3	2	1	0	0	2	0	60%	40%
Warwick	23	21	1	5	7	4	6	0	96%	26%
West Greenwich	3	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	100%	0%
West Warwick	6	5	1	0	2	1	1	1	83%	33%
Westerly	7	5	2	0	2	0	3	0	71%	43%
Woonsocket	13	13	1	1	2	1	4	4	92%	62%
Four Core Cities	79	70	12	15	18	7	16	11	85%	34%
Remainder of State	234	179	58	48	59	17	42	10	75%	22%
Rhode Island	313	249	70	63	77	24	58	21	78%	25%

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Table 38.

Licensed Family Child Care Homes Participating in the BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System, Rhode Island, January 2022

Licensed Family Child Care Programs by Preferred Language, Rhode Island, 2022



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Licensed family child care providers, 2022.

◆ In 2022, Of the 397 licensed family child care providers in Rhode Island, 26% preferred English communication, 73% preferred Spanish communication, and 1% preferred another language for communication (Portuguese, Russian, Creole and “other”).¹⁸

◆ As of December 2021, of the 1,399 children in the CCAP program with reported Hispanic ethnicity, 66% were enrolled in a center, 33% were enrolled in family child care, 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	4	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	50%	0%
Bristol	4	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	50%	0%
Burrillville	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Central Falls	14	14	1	11	2	0	0	0	93%	0%
Charlestown	0	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Coventry	3	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	33%	0%
Cranston	43	39	8	18	17	0	0	0	81%	0%
Cumberland	8	3	6	2	0	0	0	0	25%	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	8	8	0	4	3	1	0	0	100%	0%
Lincoln	5	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	20%	0%
Little Compton	0	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Middletown	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	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	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
North Providence	8	7	1	7	0	0	0	0	88%	0%
North Smithfield	4	2	2	1	0	0	1	0	50%	25%
Pawtucket	27	23	3	14	9	1	0	0	89%	0%
Portsmouth	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Providence	236	225	23	121	87	2	3	0	90%	1%
Richmond	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Scituate	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Smithfield	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
South Kingstown	3	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	67%	0%
Tiverton	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Warren	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Warwick	7	3	4	3	0	0	0	0	43%	0%
West Greenwich	0	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
West Warwick	3	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	67%	0%
Westerly	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Woonsocket	4	4	0	3	1	0	0	0	100%	0%
Four Core Cities	281	266	27	149	99	3	3	0	90%	1%
Remainder of State	116	77	43	50	21	1	1	0	63%	1%
Rhode Island	397	343	70	199	120	4	4	0	82%	1%

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Table 39.

Public Schools with Preschool Classrooms Participating in the BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System, Rhode Island, January 2022

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	1	1	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	7	2	0	0	2	2	1	71%	43%
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	NA	NA
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	0	0	0	1	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	3	0	1	0	0	1	1	100%	67%
Portsmouth	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	100%	100%
Providence	7	3	0	1	2	1	0	57%	14%
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%
Charter Schools	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
RI School for the Deaf	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	100%	100%
Four Core Cities	14	6	1	1	2	3	1	57%	29%
Remainder of State	41	22	0	3	4	8	4	46%	29%
Rhode Island	57	29	1	4	6	12	5	49%	30%

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 2022. Data on public schools are from the Rhode Island Department of Education, January 2022. Data on BrightStars quality ratings are from the Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children, January 2022.

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.
- ²³ Gordon, J., Herbst, C. M., & Tekin, E. (2018). *Who's minding the kids?: Experimental evidence on the demand for child care quality*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- ⁵⁹ Pianta, R., Downer, J., & Hamre, B. (2016). Quality in early education classrooms: Definitions, gaps, and systems. *The Future of Children*, 26(2), 119-137.
- ⁶ Phillips, D., Austin, L. J. E., & Whitebook, M. (2016). The early care and education workforce. *The Future of Children*, 26(2), 139-158.
- 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.). *Frequently asked questions about BrightStars Quality Rating & Improvement System*. Retrieved April 20, 2022, from www.brightstars.org

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