



**QUALITY  
START**



**RIVERSIDE COUNTY**

Excellence in Early Learning

**QUALITY START RIVERSIDE COUNTY  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
2017-2020**

# A LETTER FROM FIRST 5 RIVERSIDE AND THE RIVERSIDE COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION



We are proud to release this ambitious three-year strategic plan that will serve as the blueprint for our work in Riverside County to build a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) that gives our youngest learners access to high quality early childhood education. This strategic plan for Riverside County's QRIS is the result of an intensive six-month process in which cross-sector perspectives were gathered from parents of young children, educators, and representatives from a wide variety of organizations that serve children and families. These perspectives confirmed our belief that QRIS presents a unique opportunity to implement a community based approach to improving early learning environments in Riverside County.

Our county is not new to supporting early learning programs to improve their quality. First 5 Riverside, the Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE), and the Consortium for Early Learning Services have been investing in and supporting child care programs for over fifteen years. However, a national movement to build a QRIS that sets quality standards, supports providers to meet these standards, and gives parents information about making quality child care choices is new. In California, funding from the California Department of Education and First 5 California have given counties new opportunities to focus our efforts.

Locally, our QRIS work began in 2015 when RCOE and First 5 Riverside formed a partnership to build and implement Quality Start Riverside County, a community initiative that works to ensure Riverside County's youngest children have access to high quality early learning experiences that will give them a strong developmental foundation and prepare them for school and, ultimately, college and career success. To lead this effort, community partners who work to deliver quality early learning programs and meet ongoing needs for families and children in Riverside County were convened to form the Quality Start Consortium and have been the lead contributors to this plan.

Throughout this process we've seen enormous dedication from the Quality Start Consortium to establish priorities for our work to ensure that all children in Riverside County have access to high quality early learning environments. We are committed to continuing to leverage their expertise and working together to implement Quality Start Riverside County. This plan marks the beginning of our work and we are excited to see where the future will take us.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tammi Graham".

Tammi Graham, Executive Director  
First 5 Riverside

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharon A. Baskett".

Sharon Baskett, Assistant Superintendent  
Riverside County Office of Education



# THE QUALITY OF A CHILD'S EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES MAKES A DIFFERENCE



## Background

The first five years of a child's life are extremely important. Research shows that the care and education children receive from birth through age five play a major role in their early brain development and prepare them to succeed in kindergarten.

Higher quality early learning programs have a lasting effect that goes beyond kindergarten readiness: studies have shown that children who attend high quality early learning programs are more likely to be successful throughout school and in their careers.

## Achieving Quality with Quality Start

Quality Start Riverside County helps child care and preschool programs provide the highest quality early learning experiences possible. It does this by establishing standards that define what quality means and looks like for early care and education programs, and then rating programs using these standards. In addition, it provides parents and caregivers with tools and resources to find and select a quality early learning program for their child, and it gives early educators resources and professional development opportunities to continuously improve and elevate the quality of the care they provide.

Specifically, Quality Start Riverside County assesses and supports programs in the following areas:

### Child Development and School Readiness

How programs use child observation tools, create appropriate learning activities, and utilize health and developmental screenings.

### Teachers and Teaching

The teacher or family child care home provider's education and qualifications, and how effectively the teacher interacts with children.

### Program and Environment

The adult-child ratios and group size, how safe and effective the classroom environment is for learning, and qualifications of the program director.

### Children who receive a high quality early education:

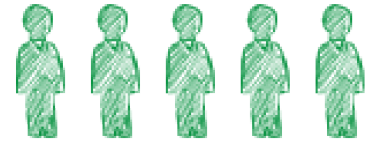
- ✓ Have stronger critical thinking skills and are better at paying attention
- ✓ Are better at engaging and cooperating with others
- ✓ Perform better in reading & math

### Other important long-term benefits of high quality early learning include:

- ✓ Reduced crime rates over time
- ✓ Lower unemployment rates
- ✓ Decreased public health care, welfare and child care expenses
- ✓ Reduced special education costs
- ✓ Increased high school graduation rates

## The Need for Quality Start in Riverside County

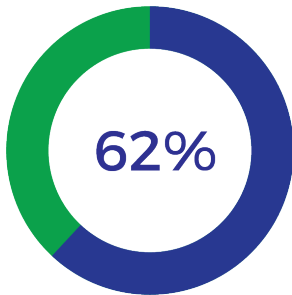
Nearly 25% of children in Riverside County live in poverty—and childhood poverty is a consistent predictor for school success. In Riverside County, only 33% of children in third grade meet grade-level standards for reading.



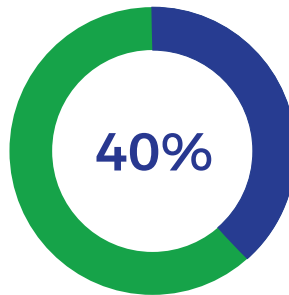
# 182,978

Number of children ages 0 through 5 in Riverside County.<sup>1</sup>

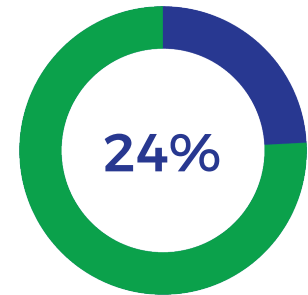
Children with parents in the workforce<sup>2</sup>



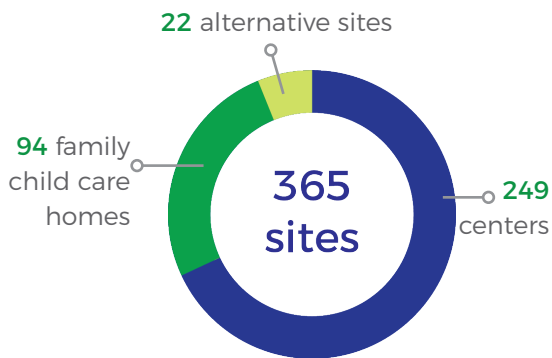
Students proficient in reading by third grade<sup>3</sup>



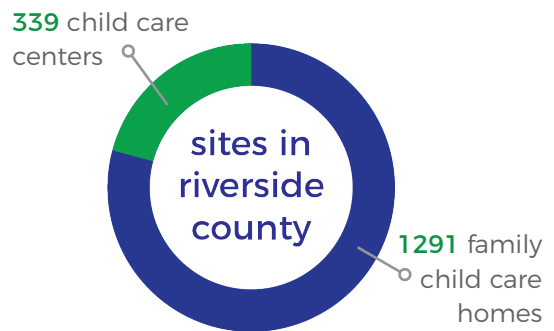
Children living in poverty<sup>4</sup>



Sites projected to participate in Quality Start



Child care sites in Riverside County



*Children need access to high quality early learning experiences in and out of their homes to help close the gap before they enter kindergarten. Quality Start Riverside County is bringing together early educators, families, and community partners for the common purpose of giving every child in Riverside County the chance to reach his or her full potential.*

Source: (1) California Dept. of Finance, Race/Ethnic Population with Age and Sex Detail, 1990-1999, 2000-2010, 2010-2060; U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Estimates, Vintage 2015 (Jun. 2016). (2) ACS 2012 and 2014 1-year estimates. (3) California Dept. of Education, CAASPP Test Results (Oct. 2016). (4) ACS 2012 and 2014 1-year estimates.

# DEVELOPING THE STRATEGIC PLAN: THE PLANNING PROCESS



## start

From January 2017 – July 2017, First 5 Riverside and the Riverside County Office of Education convened representatives from education, health, social service, and community-based organizations serving children and families, as well as higher education institutions, to begin a strategic planning process for QRIS. This group, now called the Quality Start Consortium, participated in three strategic planning sessions aimed at identifying Quality Start's vision, mission, and strategic priorities.

## intent

The intent of the strategic planning process was to create a strategic plan that will guide Quality Start partners in their work together over the coming years as the QRIS continues to be designed, implemented and refined. There was a strong emphasis on continuing to engage a cross-sector of community members who can play a role in supporting early childhood educators and parents to give children the best start possible.

## input

The planning process gathered input from Consortium members, early childhood educators, parents of children participating in Quality Start and the operational leads of the program. A survey of parents with children aged 0-5 years old, early learning educators currently participating in Quality Start Riverside County, and early learning educators not currently participating was distributed over a three-week period. More than 2,000 parents and 77 educators completed the survey in English and Spanish.

## data

Relevant community data was also compiled to provide a picture of the early learning landscape in Riverside County. This included an analysis of child care, demographic and education data, and a review of the current QRIS site targets.

## the plan

Together these activities shaped the resulting plan, which serves as the blueprint for the implementation of Quality Start Riverside County over the next three years.

# QUALITY START RIVERSIDE COUNTY'S 2017-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN



## Mission:

*Quality Start will build an integrated and sustainable approach to strengthening and supporting the quality of early learning environments for Riverside County's children, families, and educators.*

## Vision:

*Every child in Riverside County has access to high quality early learning environments that build the foundation for success in school and lifelong learning.*

## Guiding Principles:

- We work in **partnership** so that we can align high quality services to best serve children and strengthen their families.
- We are **culturally responsive** to the diverse languages, values, strengths, and needs of the communities we serve.
- We are committed to fostering **inclusive environments** in which all children and their families feel welcomed, respected, and valued.
- We value the **expertise of the early learning workforce** and support them in attaining the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to provide high quality early learning environments.
- We value **families as the experts** on what is best for their children and recognize family engagement as an important component of quality early learning.
- We use **evidence-based best practices** as a framework to build a high quality early learning system.
- We actively pursue opportunities for **continuous improvement** so that we can increase the effectiveness and sustainability of the Quality Start system.

## Strategic Goals

The Quality Start Riverside County Strategic Plan ensures that implementation of the QRIS over the next three years is effective, sustainable, and aligned with Quality Start Riverside County's long-term vision. The following systems goals have been established to advance this work:

### Goal 1: Awareness & Engagement

Ensure that early learning stakeholders are aware of the benefits of Quality Start Riverside County and engaged in supporting its success

### Goal 2: Infrastructure Development

Establish infrastructure that supports the ongoing implementation of Quality Start Riverside County

### Goal 3: Systems Alignment

Work in coordination with other systems that support the desired outcome of thriving children and families

### Goal 4: Policy, Advocacy, Sustainability

Support the long-term success and growth of Quality Start Riverside County through sustainability planning and advocacy

# OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES



## Goal 1



## Awareness & Engagement

Ensure that early learning stakeholders are aware of the benefits of Quality Start Riverside County and engaged in supporting its success

### Objective 1.1

**Create an engaged community of early educators who are committed to raising the quality of early learning programs for children and families**

Strategy 1.1.a: Develop educator recruitment materials that help reach providers who have not yet been targeted or who have chosen not to participate

Strategy 1.1.b: Produce educator recognition events, materials, and emails/newsletters to help educators feel supported and to raise the visibility of participating educators

Strategy 1.1.c: Cultivate an educator champion network that engages educators to promote Quality Start Riverside County to their peers, parents, and the community

### Objective 1.2

**Engage partners and policymakers as visible champions of Quality Start Riverside County**

Strategy 1.2.a: Cultivate a partner champion network that gives partners tools to communicate about Quality Start Riverside County

Strategy 1.2.b: Conduct a policymaker outreach and advocacy campaign to get policymaker support for high quality early learning

### Objective 1.3

**Establish Quality Start Riverside County as the trusted central hub for information and resources related to high quality early learning**

Strategy 1.3.a: Establish an aligned digital strategy, including a website and social media, across all partners and Quality Start Riverside County

Strategy 1.3.b: Create a 'Choosing Quality' toolkit for parents that supports their understanding of quality and their ability to identify high quality early learning environments

### Objective 1.4

**Increase community understanding of the important role that high quality early learning plays in young children's school-readiness and long-term success**

Strategy 1.4.a: Hold a town hall series to increase community awareness and understanding

Strategy 1.4.b: Conduct a media relations and marketing campaign to expand the reach of Quality Start Riverside County messages and target new audiences



## Goal 2



# Infrastructure Development

Establish infrastructure that supports the ongoing implementation of Quality Start Riverside County

### Objective 2.1

**Establish and document the operational and governance structures necessary for effective implementation of Quality Start Riverside County**

Strategy 2.1.a: Create a governance structure for the ongoing operation of the QRIS

Strategy 2.1.b: Develop a partnership-based, operational structure with consistent practices and protocols across the county

Strategy 2.1.c: Create a partnership agreement between QRIS operational leads that captures the operational structure, decision-making processes, and communications protocols for the system

### Objective 2.2

**Identify and coordinate education, training, and professional development opportunities that support the growth and retention of Quality Start Riverside County participants**

Strategy 2.2.a: Develop a coaching and technical assistance framework that raises the quality of the early learning workforce in key areas of the CA-QRIS Rating Matrix

Strategy 2.2.b: Develop a coordinated system of professional development resources and opportunities that build the capacity of early learning professionals to provide high quality early learning experiences

### Objective 2.3

**Utilize data collection and evaluation processes to guide continuous improvement and capture critical information about system outcomes**

Strategy 2.3.a: Implement a countywide database that stores all QRIS data

Strategy 2.3.b: Design an evaluation plan that measures the progress and impact of Quality Start Riverside County

## Goal 3



# Systems Alignment

Work in coordination with systems that support connections to families, promote high quality early learning environments, and support alignment along the educational continuum from early care and education through third grade

### Objective 3.1

**Leverage and align existing early childhood services to meet the needs of the whole child and their family**

Strategy 3.1.a: Engage in an asset mapping process in which early childhood partners collectively identify and visually represent community resources that are aligned with Quality Start Riverside County's efforts



Strategy 3.1.b: Identify opportunities to connect families that are participating in Quality Start to services that increase healthy development

Strategy 3.1.c: Identify at least one strategic partnership that strengthens the coordination between QRIS and other systems that support children and families

### Objective 3.2

### **Facilitate the development of a coordinated strategy to align ECE and K-3 practices so that Riverside County can better serve all children starting at birth**

Strategy 3.2.a: Develop a professional learning community for early childhood and early elementary leaders to share experiences, align standards, and develop strategies that support the continuum of high quality early learning from birth through the third grade

Strategy 3.2.b: Develop a training series for early childhood and early elementary professionals to broaden their knowledge of student learning across age groups and establish developmentally appropriate strategies that support children throughout their early years

## Goal 4



## **Policy, Advocacy, Sustainability**

Support the long-term success and growth of Quality Start Riverside County through sustainability planning and advocacy

### Objective 4.1

### **Develop a long-term sustainability and expansion plan for Quality Start Riverside County**

Strategy 4.1.a: Engage in a cost estimation process in order to understand and document the cost of Quality Start Riverside County

Strategy 4.1.b: Develop a QRIS Sustainability Plan that identifies financial and operational strategies for sustaining and expanding Quality Start Riverside County

### Objective 4.2

### **Advocate for policies that support increased investment in a high quality early learning system**

Strategy 4.2.a: Work in coordination with local, regional, and state leaders to share Riverside County's expertise and advocate for policies that expand high quality early learning



# NEXT STEPS



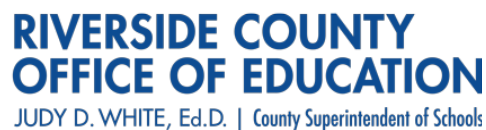
This QRIS strategic plan represents an enormous commitment in Riverside County to ensure that all of our children have access to high quality early learning environments. This work is just beginning and our success hinges on this ongoing commitment. We encourage you to join us in this effort by participating in one of the following ways:

- Through active participation at Quality Start Riverside County Consortium Meetings
- As participants in Quality Start Riverside County
- As ambassadors for QRIS and champions of high quality early learning

## Get involved!

Visit [www.qualitystartrc.org](http://www.qualitystartrc.org) to learn more.

This strategic plan was developed by VIVA Strategy + Communications for First 5 Riverside, the Riverside County Office of Education, and the Consortium for Early Learning Services. The strategic plan was made possible by funding from First 5 California IMPACT.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



We would like to thank and acknowledge the many community members who committed their time and expertise to the strategic planning process.

- Adria Galarza, Lake Elsinore Unified School District
- Annette Webb, University of California, Riverside Extension
- Cammy Purper, California Baptist University
- Carol Abella, First 5 Riverside
- Charity Webb, First 5 Riverside
- Curley Palmer, Public Health Nursing
- Cynthia Pledger, Riverside University Health System, Public Health
- Deborah Clark-Crews, Consortium for Early Learning Services
- Dianne Russom, College of the Desert
- Frieda Brands, Lake Elsinore Unified School District
- Gayle Hoxter, Riverside University Health System, Public Health
- Guillermina Hernandez, University of California, Riverside Extension
- Heather Hernandez, First 5 Riverside
- Jan Powell, Riverside County Office of Education
- Janet Cooper, Lake Elsinore Unified School District
- Jeanne Bargman, Riverside County Special Education Local Plan Area
- Jennifer Beggs, Riverside County Office of Education
- Jill Johnson, Riverside County Office of Education
- Joe Nieto, Riverside Unified School District
- Judith Wood, Family Service Association
- Kate Hamaker, Murrieta Valley Unified School District
- Linda Lovett, Lovett's Children, Inc.
- Loretta Broadnax, Department of Public Social Services - Children's Services Division
- May Eslava, Family Service Association
- Piera Causley, First 5 Riverside
- Robin Fairfield, Riverside County Office of Education
- Sharon Baskett, Riverside County Office of Education
- Shine Nissar, Desert Sands Unified School District
- Sonia Rios, Lake Elsinore Unified School District
- Tammi Graham, First 5 Riverside
- Toni Rangel, Riverside City College
- Yvonne Suarez, First 5 Riverside



