



Excellence in Early Learning

**Parents' and Early Educators' Views  
on Early Learning, Quality, and QRIS**





# INTRODUCTION

In 2017, Riverside County began a strategic planning and communications planning process for its local quality rating improvement system (QRIS), Quality Start Riverside County. QRIS success relies in part on educators and parents understanding and utilizing the system. For early educators, this means that they understand and value the benefits of quality improvement through QRIS participation. For parents, this means understanding the importance of quality improvement and utilizing ratings information to inform their child care choices.

In February and March 2017, on behalf of Quality Start Riverside County, VIVA Strategy + Communications conducted surveys in English and Spanish 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.

## The survey was focused on the following:

- Understanding of and opinions on quality early learning
- Understanding of quality improvement
- Awareness of the local QRIS (Quality Start Riverside County)
- Communication preferences

The survey results provide a picture of how parents and educators view quality, and offer valuable insight that can help shape strategies to expand awareness and engagement in the QRIS.

## Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) Support Child Care Programs and Preschools to Provide the Highest Quality Early Learning Experiences Possible for Children by:

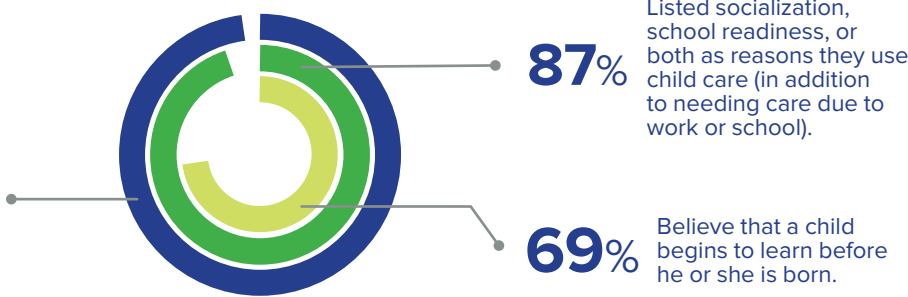
- Establishing standards that define “quality” for early learning programs
- Measuring the quality of programs using the established standards
- Offering and connecting educators to professional development opportunities
- Helping parents and caregivers find quality programs for their children

# KEY FINDINGS: PARENTS

## Early Learning

Parents believe that child care plays a role in their child’s learning and development.

92% Expressed confidence that their child care program was helping their child be ready for kindergarten.



## Child Care Decision Making

Parents were asked to rank factors that contribute to their child care decision making.

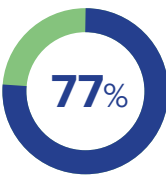
79% ranked safety as the **most** important factor when making child care decisions. 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> fell closely together, suggesting that parents consider these factors similarly when making decisions.

1 <sup>st</sup>	Safety	7 <sup>th</sup>	Cost
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Nutrition	8 <sup>th</sup>	Size
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Teacher personality and child interactions	9 <sup>th</sup>	Type
4 <sup>th</sup>	Teacher qualifications	10 <sup>th</sup>	Reputation
5 <sup>th</sup>	Curriculum	11 <sup>th</sup>	Language
6 <sup>th</sup>	Location		

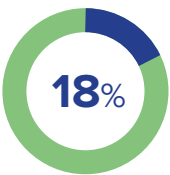
# ABOUT THE PARENT RESPONDENTS

## 2137 Parents Completed the Survey

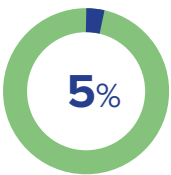
78% in English and 22% in Spanish



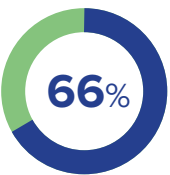
youngest child is 3-5 years old



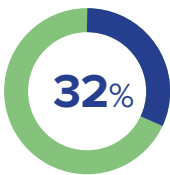
youngest child is 1-3 years old



have a child under 1 year old



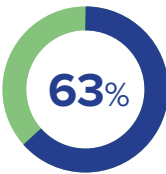
place children in care due to work



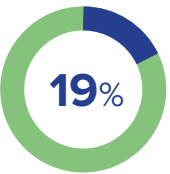
are students or are students who also work

# ABOUT THE EDUCATOR RESPONDENTS

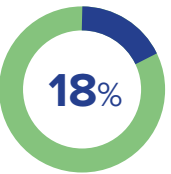
## 77 Educators Completed the Survey



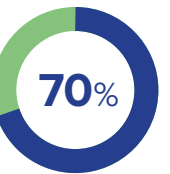
family child care educators



child care center administrators



child care center teachers



currently participate in the local QRIS

## Trusted Resources

for parenting

1. Pediatrician
2. Friends/Neighbors
3. Riverside County Office of Education
4. First 5 Riverside
5. Parenting Websites, Articles, and Books

for child care decision making

1. Friends/Neighbors
2. Riverside County Office of Education
3. Resource and Referral Agency
4. Local Agencies and Programs
5. First 5 Riverside

## School Readiness

- Parents frequently mentioned self-regulation and social-emotional skills as important for their children’s school readiness, as well as academic skills, such as knowing the alphabet, numbers, and basic writing and pre-reading skills.
- Infrequently mentioned were critical thinking and creativity, as well as physical readiness, such as potty training and motor skills.

## Quality

- Most parents equated quality early learning with curriculum, teachers/teaching, attention and focus on children, excellence, and school readiness.
- Very few mentioned thinking that quality meant that a program met specific standards.

## QRIS Awareness and Confidence

73%

Do not know anything, or do not know much, about Quality Start Riverside County

49%

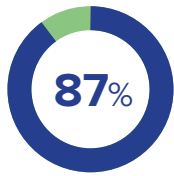
Are unsure if their child’s early learning program participated in Quality Start

90%

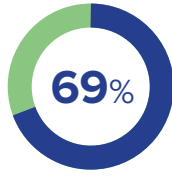
(Of those who did know their child’s program participated) believe that Quality Start is helping the program improve its quality

## KEY FINDINGS: EARLY EDUCATORS

### Why Educators Participate in QRIS



to improve the quality of their classroom or program



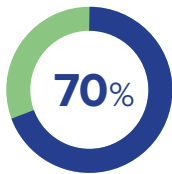
to learn about child development and receive professional development support

#### Top 3 Reasons Educators Would Decide to Participate in QRIS:

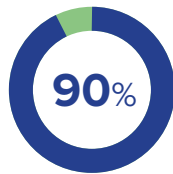
- Improving their quality
- Learning about child development
- Financial incentives

### What Educators Say About QRIS

- Professional development, training opportunities and financial incentives are reported as the most compelling reasons for educators to continue participating in Quality Start after receiving a rating.
- A peer support network, business support, and re-rating opportunities were not selected as likely reasons for continued participation.
- Of those educators surveyed who do not currently participate, the majority reported that they don't have enough time to participate.



report that participation has been "beneficial" or "very beneficial"



would recommend that other educators participate

### Communications with Parents About Quality

*Participating educators were asked both what they had told parents, and what they thought parents should know about Quality Start Riverside County and educators' quality improvement efforts.*

- Most told parents how their participation would benefit the child or family.
- The benefit for the educator and the impact on the program (e.g., funds for new materials) were also mentioned.
- They would also like parents to know about the effort required to participate.

*All educators were asked what they thought parents should know about quality early learning.*

- The teacher's role in creating quality (and the importance of teacher training and development) ranked high.
- The fact that children's early years are their most critical time for learning was also seen as important.
- A specific connection to school readiness was infrequently mentioned, as were specific quality indicators such as those measured by QRIS.

*Educators were asked why they thought parents selected their programs.*

- The top response among educators was their reputation/recommendations from friends and neighbors), which did not emerge as a top reason in the parents' surveys.
- Teachers' personality and interactions with children was also chosen as a primary reason, which aligns with parents' responses.
- Teacher qualifications, another top response for parents, was low on educators' lists.

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