

# Early care and education quality improvement: A typology of intervention approaches <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Full report PDF <sup>[2]</sup>

## Overview

The purpose of this brief is to support continued innovation and inquiry in early care and education (ECE) quality improvement (QI) efforts by presenting an expanded range of QI alternatives in a novel framework. Despite an increased focus on QI at the federal, state, and local levels, there is little agreement on how to implement QI efforts effectively, particularly within state Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS). To date, most evaluation designs have largely been unable to disentangle the effects of particular components of QI interventions, which makes evidence-based decision-making difficult for policymakers and practitioners alike. This brief outlines a conceptual framework of QI that captures a broad typology of QI approaches. The brief also includes a scan of the evidence base for QI efforts to identify those supported by a substantial or growing body of evidence, those for which there is little evidence or for which findings are mixed, and those that demonstrate null and negative impacts on global quality, teaching behaviors, or child outcomes.

The brief identifies four types of QI efforts that aim to change behavior and indirectly impact children's outcomes. These QI types and the summary of evidence for each include:

- ECE workforce interventions that target instructional practices, including providing training and relationship-based supports, helping teachers engage in formal education or credentialing, supporting curriculum implementation, using data-driven instruction and decision-making, and providing financial incentives. At this level, the most rigorous evidence of effectiveness exists for some subtypes of relationship-based supports (coaching and consultation), curriculum interventions, and data-driven decision-making (through child progress monitoring).
- Setting-level interventions that target the instructional environment, including reducing child-adult ratios and group sizes, providing grants for facilities and learning materials, improving leadership and administrative practices, developing shared services, providing technical assistance to achieve higher program standards, promoting a culture of continuous quality improvement, and provision of financial incentives. There is a modest amount of rigorous research for this QI type; lower teacher-child ratios and group size requirements have the strongest evidence within this category.
- Family-level interventions that increase families' understanding of ECE quality, including provision of consumer education, financial incentives, tuition credits, and conditional cash transfers. The evidence base on these types of interventions is not yet developed.
- System-level interventions that build, enhance, coordinate or introduce interventions into the system, including developing requirements related to professional development, credentialing and training registries; strengthening higher education; strengthening program licensure and regulations; investing in governance and data-driven decision-making; developing financing strategies; and implementing QRIS. The evidence base on these types of interventions is not yet developed.

The QI framework and the scan of existing literature demonstrate that minimal evidence is available to guide decision-making in ECE outside of a few intervention approaches at the workforce and setting levels. There is tremendous opportunity to advance the field. The brief offers a framework for continuous quality improvement for ECE. Moreover, it encourages the ECE community to build its evidence base through data collection, research, and testing of innovating interventions and strategies.

**Region:** United States <sup>[3]</sup>

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/15/12/early-care-and-education-quality-improvement-typology>

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/15/12/early-care-and-education-quality-improvement-typology> <sup>[2]</sup>

