

**Roundtable on Developing the Next Wave of Quality Measures for
Early Childhood and School-Age Programs**

**January 23-25, 2008
Washington, DC**

Meeting Summary

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Meeting Summary

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Sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation
and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
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Purpose of the Roundtable

A December 2006 meeting, *Roundtable on Measuring Quality in Early Childhood and School-Age Settings: At the Junction of Research, Policy, and Practice*, examined measurement strategies and how quality measurement is being used in policy and practice settings. The meeting highlighted the need for further investigation of how well measures are functioning in state quality improvement initiatives and how well they lead to positive outcomes in young children.¹

In January 2008, Child Trends convened a second meeting, *Developing the Next Wave of Quality Measures for Early Childhood and School-Age Programs*. Its purpose was to gather experts who specialize in a range of topics related to child care quality and child outcomes to guide the field on possible directions for developing, refining, and strengthening measurement strategies.

Goals and Scope

There were four goals for the January 2008 meeting:

1. To identify strategies for developing and strengthening measures of quality
2. To develop guidance documents for the field and funders
3. To acknowledge exciting developments in research focusing on specific content areas that are important to the measurement of quality
4. To provide an opportunity for in-depth discussion of these new developments and how they inform the measurement of quality

With these goals in mind, participants were asked not to focus on immediately translating new findings or strategies to inform policy, though it was noted that this would take place in the near future. Additionally, participants were asked not to criticize or advertise specific measures, but to address more broad measurement strategies and options.

¹ The full report of the *Roundtable on Measuring Quality in Early Childhood and School-Age Settings: At the Junction of Research, Policy, and Practice* can be found on the Early Care and Education Research Connections website at the following location: <http://www.researchconnections.org/location/ccrca12621>. The executive summary of the meeting is at <http://www.researchconnections.org/location/ccrca12699>.

Organization and Structure

The roundtable began with presentations and group discussion aimed at clarifying the purpose and goals of the meeting and outlining key contextual factors framing the topics of discussion. Next, meeting participants divided into working groups to address aspects of practice (interactions and environments) related to four developmental domains and two broad constellations of factors affecting child development:

- language and literacy
- math, science, and general cognitive development
- social and emotional development
- health, safety, and nutrition
- families
- culture

Working group participants, guided by facilitators within each group, were asked to consider a set of questions regarding the measurement of quality in their specified domain (see Working Groups section, below). Next, participants shared their groups' findings, considered opportunities to combine elements of quality measurement across domains, and discussed next steps for research and translating findings to policy and practice settings.

The remainder of this document outlines key issues addressed at the roundtable, summarizes key themes from each of the meeting sessions, and describes follow-up steps.

Welcome and Opening Session

Ivelisse Martinez-Beck, Child Care Research Coordinator for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE), provided a context for the meeting in her welcome and opening remarks. Dr. Martinez-Beck tied the current meeting to follow-up goals set at the December 2006 meeting, *Roundtable on Measuring Quality in Early Childhood and School-Age Settings: At the Junction of Research, Policy, and Practice*. These goals included:

1. examining why researchers are finding small associations between quality measures and child outcomes, focusing especially on low-income children
2. examining domains of quality and measurement issues in a timely manner, while addressing the implications of these issues for states
3. helping inform the states and federal funders as progress is made in developing quality measures appropriate for monitoring early childhood and school-age programs.

Dr. Martinez-Beck highlighted the implications of this meeting for future policies, program monitoring, and research. She also reviewed trends in nonparental child care use disaggregated by the age of the child, household income and poverty status, and the primary language spoken in the household using data from the National Household Education Survey (2005) and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study--Birth Cohort (2001).

Plenary Sessions

Plenary Session I:

Child Care Quality and Child Outcomes (Peg Burchinal, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of California, Irvine)

Dr. Burchinal reported results of two sets of analyses: 1) a meta-analysis of findings from studies assessing the association between measures of child care quality and child outcomes, and 2) results of coordinated secondary data analyses examining the association of quality and child outcomes in five studies, focusing specifically on children from low-income families.

Plenary Session II:

Key Points from Measuring Quality in Early Care and School-Age Care Settings: Challenges and Alternatives (Bob Pianta, University of Virginia)

Dr. Pianta reviewed a number of issues related to assessing quality in early care and education settings. Among the issues addressed were how quality is conceptualized; methodological issues of measurement, such as identifying the appropriate unit of analysis or method of data collection and maximizing reliability and validity; and creating measures that are well-suited for policy and program evaluations. In his presentation, Dr. Pianta emphasized the need to align measures of quality with professional development of the early childhood workforce, as well as with desired child outcomes.

Plenary Session III:

Key Points from an Example of a Quality Rating System in Minnesota (Deb Swenson-Klatt, Minnesota Department of Human Services)

Ms. Swenson-Klatt shared her experiences implementing a pilot quality rating system in Minnesota. She also shared practical realities of selecting measurement tools. She emphasized the importance of communicating information on quality in a clear manner to parents as well as policy makers.

Framing the Work of the Working Groups: Goals and Challenges

Martha Zaslow and Kathryn Tout from Child Trends provided direction for the goals and structure of the working groups. They reiterated the primary goals of the meeting: to identify strategies for developing and strengthening measures of quality as well as to develop guidance documents for the field and funders. Then they outlined the structure of the meeting, noting that working groups would meet for in-depth discussions, keeping in mind the goal of integration and a dual focus on research and measurement. They also explained that assigned facilitators from within the group would guide each group in identifying follow-up steps for further improvement of the measurement of key constructs in their domain. At the end, participants would share discussions from the groups in integrative sessions.

Groups were challenged to identify steps that could be taken toward the development of measures that were applicable to diverse children; particular attention was given to diversity in terms of a child's age, early and school-age care setting, culture,

and language. Drs. Zaslow and Tout reminded participants to respect work that has been completed and to neither endorse nor critique specific measures. Working groups were provided with a number of resources, including an agenda, participant list, synthesis of accreditation standards, Head Start Performance Standards, Pew Report on Early Childhood Accountability Systems, discussion guide, measures compendium, hard copies of measures, articles from a resource library focusing on the specific domains, and a note taker.

Working Groups

The working groups centered around the four domains of child well-being named earlier (language and literacy; math, science, and cognition; social and emotional development; health, safety, and nutrition) and two contexts of development (families and culture). They each met in two, three-hour sessions to discuss research and measurement issues relevant to their respective domains.

Each working group addressed the following set of questions:

1. Why is this domain important to measure?
 - a. What child outcomes do we care about in relation to this domain?
 - b. What do we want to support in children by measuring this domain?
2. What important new work is emerging (or established) in this domain that tells us about specific features of interactions and environments that support children's outcomes? What are the implications of this work for measurement?
3. Does the emerging research extend to or have implications for the measurement of quality in differing age groups and settings? What about for children from differing cultures or who are learning English?
4. What are the strengths and limitations of current measurement strategies in this domain?
5. What is the potential for strengthening existing measures and building new measures in this domain? What are the possibilities both for domain-specific measurement and for measures focusing on multiple domains or providing an overview of quality?
6. What are the implications of measurement in this area for policy and practice?
7. How does and how should measurement of this domain address issues of age, setting, culture, language, and ability?
8. What recommendations can the group make for immediate and longer-term action?

Key themes from each of these working groups will be summarized in a forthcoming book and in a research-to-practice brief (see Follow-Up Steps, below).

Putting Together a Complete Package: Applications to Policy and Practice

In the final session, each working group reported on the key issues that had been identified by participants. Following this discussion, participants shared concluding thoughts and next steps. In the concluding discussion, each group made specific

recommendations for improving measurement as well as discussed implications for policy and practice.

Follow-Up Steps

A number of follow-up steps are being developed as a result of the meeting described here and another meeting held in December 2006. The follow-up steps and products described below are aimed at disseminating the information from the two meetings to stakeholders, including federal and state policy makers, practitioners, and researchers in the field. They include:

- **A series of papers that will review different components of quality and its measurement:** These papers, which will be submitted for journal review, will address the following topics:
 - The dimensions of quality that have and have not been captured adequately in the measurement of quality in the research literature
 - The functioning of quality measures designed to assess center-based settings
 - The functioning of quality measures designed to assess home-based settings
 - The role of quality measures in policy and practice contexts
- **Publication of *Developing the Next Wave of Quality Measures for Early Childhood and School-Age Programs*:** The prepared presentations, key themes, and ongoing work of each of the six working groups from the January 2008 meeting will be compiled in a book, for which a prospectus has been submitted.
- **Publication of *Measuring Quality in Early Childhood and School-Age Programs*:** A brief document will outline key issues and caveats related to the measurement of quality in early childhood and school-age programs. This document will be made available through the Early Care and Education Research Connections website.
- **Publication of a Research-to-Practice Brief Series:** Based on the proceedings of the January 2008 meeting, researchers involved in the *Developing the Next Wave of Quality Measures for Early Childhood and School-Age Programs* meeting will prepare three research-to-practice briefs. These documents will be available on Early Care and Education Research Connections website:
 - *Early Care and Education Quality and Child Outcomes* (Burchinal, Kainz, Cai, Tout, Zaslow, Martinez-Beck, & Rathgeb)
 - *Evaluating, Developing, and Enhancing Domain-Specific Measures of Child Care Quality* (Forry, Vick, & Halle)
 - *Differing Purposes for Measuring Quality in Early Care and Education Settings: Emerging Issues* (Zaslow, Tout, & Halle)
- **Meeting on Evaluation of State Quality Rating Systems:** In response to states' requests for support on planning and executing evaluations of Quality Rating Systems (QRS), OPRE planned and hosted a third meeting focused on sharing knowledge and resources across states involved in QRS evaluation. The meeting, held April 23-24, 2008, in Washington, DC, included representatives from nine states engaged in developing or executing evaluations of their states' QRSs, along

with their evaluators and several independent researchers. Participants shared information about state-specific goals (for both their QRSs and for the evaluations of those systems), research questions, and evaluation design and strategies. The group also considered opportunities to synthesize information and collaborate across state efforts. A summary of that meeting will be made available through the Early Care and Education Research Connections website.

- **Presentations at Meetings and Webinars:** Conveners and presenters at the January meeting have presented summaries of that meeting to the following groups:
 - **Child Care Policy Research Consortium Webinar** (April 15, 2008)
 - **State and Territory Child Care Administrators' Meeting (STAM)** (July 28-30, 2008, Washington, DC)
 - **Child Care Policy Research Consortium Meeting (CCPRC)** (July 31-August 1, 2008, Washington, DC)