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Teachers' Voices

Work Environment Conditions That Impact Teacher Practice and Program Quality



NEW YORK

Center for the Study of Child Care Employment
Institute for Research on Labor and Employment
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Teachers' Voices: Work Environment Conditions That Impact Teacher Practice and Program Quality — New York

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Established in 1999, the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) is focused on achieving comprehensive public investments that enable the early childhood workforce to deliver high-quality care and education for all children. To achieve this goal, CSCCE conducts research and policy analysis about the characteristics of those who care for and educate young children and examines policy solutions aimed at improving how our nation prepares, supports, and rewards these early educators to ensure young children's optimal development. CSCCE provides research and expert analysis on topics that include: compensation and economic insecurity among early educators; early childhood teacher preparation; access to educational opportunities and work environments; and early childhood workforce data sources and systems. CSCCE also works directly with policymakers and a range of national, state, and local organizations to assess policy proposals and provide technical assistance on implementing sound early care and education workforce policy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Introduction

THERE IS BROAD CONSENSUS that high-quality environments for young children depend on teachers who are skilled at nurturing their development and learning, yet low pay and inadequate working conditions routinely hamper teachers in their efforts to apply their skills and knowledge.ⁱ This condition exists among teachers in early education as well as K-12 classrooms, fueling the ubiquitous challenge of recruiting and retaining a skilled teaching workforce across the age spectrum. K-12 teachers nationwide are now calling attention to how inadequate pay and poor working conditions are driving economic insecurity and turnover and insufficient classroom resources continue to hobble their practice, leading to large-scale demonstrations for increased public investment in education. With teachers increasingly engaging in the public sphere and a growing number of political candidates prioritizing support for schools and teachers, the demand for change to the systems that prepare, support, and compensate educators continues to build.

The Unique Challenge of Early Childhood

The voices of early educators — those working with children from infancy through preschool — are rarely heard, and public awareness of the challenges facing this workforce remains low. Compared to their K-12 peers, early educators are less organized and vocal about their situation, but a persistent state of teacher crisis casts a pall over efforts to ensure high-quality early care and education for all children prior to kindergarten.

Access to unions and professional organizations that advocate for benefits and supportive work conditions in the K-12 workplace are far rarer for early educators. Perhaps as a result, even basic expectations of working conditions — such as program policies providing for payment for planning time, staff meetings, and professional development; a salary schedule accounting for experience and varied levels of education; and provision of health, retirement, sick-, and vacation-leave benefits that most K-12 educators can rely upon — are not routinely available to early educators, nor are they typically the focus of strategies and policies to improve the quality of early care and education services.ⁱⁱ

This study captures the perspectives of early educators about their working environments in one state, New York, and how these environments impact teaching staff practice and well-being. In order to teach to the best of their ability, educators require work environments that support their ongoing learning, emphasize time without child responsibilities for

professional activities, and offer dependable benefits that ensure their well-being. With prioritization of workforce supports, quality improvement initiatives can make substantive progress towards a system that is equitable, efficient, and effective for children, their families, and educators alike.

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

Currently operational across 44 of the 50 states, Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) have become a primary approach for quality improvement efforts intended to strengthen early care and education systems within states and local municipalities. The elements incorporated into a system's QRIS communicate important messages to stakeholders (including policymakers, teachers, and administrators) about the values and priorities deemed most important for focusing resources and attention.ⁱⁱⁱ While staff qualifications and training are one of the most commonly assessed areas of quality and are included in nearly all QRIS, fewer systems to date include benchmarks related to positive and supportive teacher work environments.^{iv} The attention that a given QRIS pays to the workforce through staff education, professional development, compensation, benefits, and work environments may determine how practitioners invest their energies, how public resources and priorities are allocated, and the ultimate success of the QRIS effort itself.^v

QUALITYstarsNY and Teacher Work Environments

New York State's QRIS, QUALITYstarsNY, rates early childhood programs based on quality standards in four categories: the Learning Environment, Family Engagement, Qualifications and Experience, and Management and Leadership. A program's rating is determined using a point system that results in a one- to five-star rating with "five stars" denoting the highest quality rating. An independent evaluation of program quality is also conducted using the Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) tool for programs that receive a rating of three to five stars. For more information on QUALITYstarsNY see: <http://qualitystarsny.org/>.

To encourage better conditions for teachers, numerous QUALITYstarsNY Standards emphasize teachers' work environments. According to CSCCE's 2018 *Early Childhood Workforce Index*, New York state is one of just three states across the country making headway with regard to the early education work environment.^{vi} Specifically, programs participating in QUALITYstarsNY can earn points toward their rating for providing staff with paid time for professional development and paid planning and/or preparation time, as well as establishing a salary schedule, offering a range of benefits, and

providing paid time off for vacation and holidays. To support more stability, staff turnover rates are included in the rating, as well.^{vii} To this end, QUALITYstarsNY administrators, among others, were interested in utilizing SEQUAL (see p. 5 for a description) with a specific focus on gathering perspectives of teaching staff working in QRIS rated programs about the features of their work environments that support or hamper their practice and ongoing learning. The findings from this study can serve as a starting point to inform improvements in QRIS and for generating new avenues and solutions to enhance teacher practice and well-being.

Figure 1

State Map of Work Environment Standards Assessment



- STALLED:** The state has made limited or no progress.
- EDGING FORWARD:** The state has made partial progress.
- MAKING HEADWAY:** The state is taking action and advancing promising policies.
- NOT APPLICABLE:** Could not be assessed due to a lack of data in the QRIS compendium.

Source: State Map of Work Environment Standards Assessment. Reprinted from *Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018*, by Whitebook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018, retrieved from <http://csce.berkeley.edu/early-childhood-workforce-2018-index/>. Copyright 2018 by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment.

SEQUAL (Supportive Environmental Quality Underlying Adult Learning)

To facilitate the process of bringing teachers' voices into quality improvement strategies, the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) developed the Supportive Environmental Quality Underlying Adult Learning tool, or SEQUAL. As a multi-purpose validated tool, SEQUAL addresses five critical areas of teachers' learning environments: **Teaching Supports**, **Learning Community**, **Job Crafting**, **Adult Well-Being**, and **Program Leadership**. The SEQUAL study conducted in the state of New York provides a window into the daily realities of center-based early childhood teaching staff employed in programs participating in the New York QRIS.

SEQUAL DOMAINS

TEACHING
SUPPORTS

LEARNING
COMMUNITY

JOB
CRAFTING

ADULT
WELL-BEING

PROGRAM
LEADERSHIP

Key Findings

QUALITYstarsNY STANDARDS AFFIRM the importance of supportive work environment conditions in achieving program quality. Transforming the way the early education system values and supports teachers' work conditions requires sustained strategies implemented on multiple levels. The perspectives of teaching staff represented in the CSCCE study underscore the need for further changes in practices and provision of necessary professional supports to ensure that standards, including basic legal requirements like paid breaks, are consistently enforced. While teaching staff working in higher-rated centers tended to assess their work environments more positively, it is notable that challenges were evident across rating levels (see Findings, p. 24). Three areas in particular require improvement based on teaching staff assessments of their work environments: **Adult Well-Being**, **Staffing and Teaching Supports**, and **Professional Development and Guidance**.

Adult Well-Being

Economic

Teaching staff struggled to meet monthly expenses and afford housing, health, transportation, and food costs.

- **71%** worried about paying housing costs.
- **70%** worried about paying for routine health care costs.
- **50%** worried about having enough food for their families.

“**My well-being can affect my emotional state, ability to be well-rested, and my enthusiasm and motivation to do well at my job. Being genuinely supported, having security financially, a support network, [...] colleagues, students, families, and the individuals that are a part of my life are all factors in my ability to educate to the best of my abilities. When I am secure and supported, I can [...] provide security, support, feel inspired, and help encourage and participate in a healthy, happy culture that benefits all of us.**”

-Assistant Teacher of three- and four-year-olds,
Three-Star Center

Quality of Work Life

Quality of work life may exacerbate stress, as many staff members reported experiencing workplace dynamics like intimidation, favoritism, or a lack of opportunities for input within their program.

- Just **57%** agreed that bullying by other adults is *not* tolerated in their program.
- Only **34%** agreed that staff input on program policies is taken seriously.

Health and Safety

Teaching staff reported lacking basic health and safety materials or supports.

- **52%** assessed the ability to take paid breaks during the workday as undependable.
- **40%** did not reliably have access to a safe place to store their personal belongings.

Staffing and Teaching Supports

Sufficient Staffing

Teaching staff assessed staffing levels as insufficient to engage in practices necessary to promote children’s learning and to improve their practice.

- **53%** agreed or somewhat agreed that frequent changes in staff make it difficult for them to try new ways to teach.
- Just **40%** agreed that there are enough staff available to give children individual attention, while **37%** agreed that there are trained substitutes/floaters available to help.
- Only **49%** reported having sufficient time each week to carefully observe children.

“**There are very few chances to make observations [...] At the same time, we are required to do observations once a week, meaning observations are generally very quick and not very in-depth [...] At the same time, turnover is high, so even if someone is trained, they will most likely leave soon.**”

-Teacher of three- and four-year-olds,
Three-Star Center

Time for Professional Responsibilities

Teaching staff used their own unpaid time or time while supervising children on the playground or during naps to complete their professional responsibilities.

- **41%** had dedicated time, without responsibility for children, to discuss work-related issues with other teachers.
- Only **23%** had paid time, without responsibility for children, for planning in the prior week.
- Just **19%** had paid time, without responsibility for children, for doing paperwork for their job in the prior week.

Professional Development and Guidance

Access, Payment, and Reward

Many staff members reported difficulties in accessing or paying for professional development activities or receiving remuneration for advancing their skills or education.

- **49%** could not reliably adjust their work schedule in order to participate in professional development activities.
- **41%** could not reliably expect that their employer would pay some or all of their professional development expenses.

Applying Learning

Teaching staff reported lack of choice in professional development activities and limited opportunity to practice new skills or share professionally in the classroom.

- **50%** had not engaged in dedicated time to reflect on teaching with other teachers in the previous six months.
- **50%** reported having a choice in the form of professional development in which they took part.

“**Inconsistencies in staffing [coverage] and timing of breaks can make it challenging to integrate new things in the classroom [as] I do not have opportunities to meet with other staff members to discuss what’s happening.**”

- Teacher of three- and four-year-olds,
Two-Star Center

Guidance

Teaching staff reported an absence of guidance from program leaders in supporting their professional practice.

- **53%** disagreed that at least once a year, their supervisors meet with them to develop a personalized professional development plan.
- Only **36%** agreed that once a month, their supervisors meet with them to discuss their teaching practice.

Capturing the experiences and perspectives of early educators working directly with children as a component of evaluating QUALITYstarsNY presents an opportunity to further refine and strengthen the policies, practices, and resources necessary to facilitate a high-quality system that supports children and their teachers alike. The findings from the New York SEQUAL study presented in the following pages, coupled with forthcoming resources, are intended to inform decision making and guide quality improvement strategies in the state of New York.

About This Report

THE FOLLOWING REPORT PRESENTS the findings from the 2017 New York SEQUAL study and includes the perspectives of teaching staff employed in programs participating in QUALITYstarsNY in the spring and fall of 2017. Following a description of the study design, this report will explore major findings drawn from teaching staff responses. Thus, the report is divided into three sections:

- 1) **Study Design** shares a study overview, goals guiding the study, a profile of the survey respondents, and a guide to the findings;
- 2) **Findings** outlines teaching staff responses to items in each of the five SEQUAL domains, including an analysis of how responses varied by site characteristics and quality ratings; and
- 3) **Appendices** presents additional information on the study design, which includes survey instruments and analysis, characteristics of program leaders, and additional tables and figures.



STUDY DESIGN

The lower half of the page features a series of diagonal stripes. From top to bottom, they are: a light blue stripe, a dark blue stripe, a yellow stripe, and a dark blue stripe. These stripes originate from the left edge and extend towards the right edge, creating a sense of movement and depth.

Study Overview

In 2017, researchers from CSCCE implemented a SEQUAL study across the state of New York to examine how teaching staff employed at center-based programs participating in QUALITYstarsNY assessed their work environments. Teaching staff (teachers and assistant teachers) completed an online survey — the SEQUAL for teaching staff — to capture perceptions of their work environments and provide information about their demographic background, educational preparation, and work experience, including their current position, job tenure, and compensation. Program leaders filled out a version of the online survey about their center to provide contextual information about the centers. They also answered questions about their own demographic and professional background and current job role.

The sample was drawn from the 315 rated centers participating in QUALITYstarsNY. Among the 124 centers invited to participate, the final sample included 111 centers, 66 program leaders, and 356 members of the teaching staff.

Table 1. Response Rates of Centers, Program Leaders, and Teaching Staff

	Invited Sample	Final Sample	Percentage Participating
Centers	124	111	90%
Program Leaders	124	66	53%
Teaching Staff	2083	356	17%

For a more detailed description of the study methodology, study instruments, sampling frame and selection, population and sample, response rates, and analysis plan, please see Appendix A: Study Design and Appendix C: Tables and Figures.

Goals Guiding the Study

The study examined how teaching staff employed at center-based programs participating in QUALITYstarsNY assessed their work environments overall and across specific domains, as captured by the SEQUAL survey instruments (see description, p. 63). In addition, the study examined how assessments varied by:

- The center's assigned quality rating, as determined by its star rating;
- The center's observed quality for centers with a rating of three, four, and five stars, as determined by the ECERS or ITERS score (for more information, see p. 58).
- The center's location either in New York City or elsewhere in the state of New York;
- The age group of children served at the center; and
- The characteristics of teaching staff, including position, tenure, and age group of children in the classroom.

A Profile of the Survey Respondents

Teaching Staff

Here, we paint a detailed portrait of the teaching staff in our sample and note differences among staff members based on job role and other characteristics. If differences are not noted, there were no statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) found among staff members.

Staff in the sample worked full-time at their center. More than three-quarters (77 percent) worked 35 hours or more per week, and almost all teaching staff (97 percent) worked 10 months or more per year. Among teaching staff, 35 percent worked as assistant teachers and 58 percent as teachers.^{viii} The remaining 7 percent identified their role as another related teaching role (specialized teaching staff).

Teaching staff were more likely to work exclusively with three- and four-year-olds (44 percent) than a mix of children across the birth-to-age-five span or school-age children (38 percent) or exclusively with infants and toddlers (12 percent).

Personal Characteristics

Gender and Age

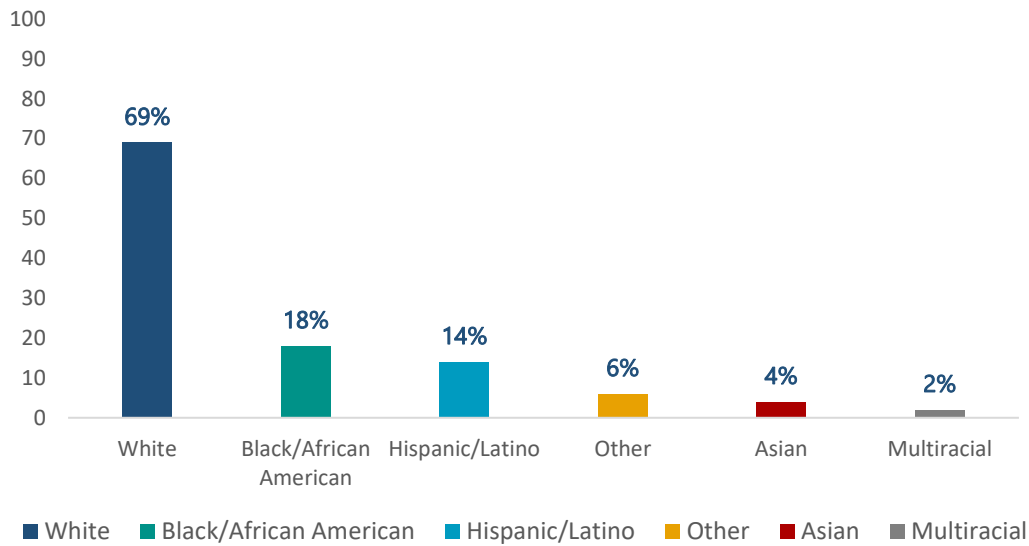
Nearly all teaching staff in the sample were female (96 percent). Teaching staff were 41 years old on average. Older teaching staff were more likely to work in four-star and five-star centers. Teaching staff working at four- and five-star centers also had worked in the early care and education field and had been employed at their centers and in the same position longer than staff employed at centers with lower ratings.

Race and Ethnicity

About one-third of teaching staff in the SEQUAL sample were identified as people of color, reflecting similar data from the National Survey of Early Care and Education data.^{ix} The breakdown by race/ethnicity was 69-percent white, 18-percent black/African American, 14-percent Hispanic/Latino, 6-percent other, 4-percent Asian, and 2-percent multiracial (see **Figure 2**). Teaching staff working at centers in New York City were much more likely to be people of color (61 percent) compared to teaching staff working at centers elsewhere in New York (20 percent).

Figure 2

Race/Ethnicity of Survey Respondents



Racial Stratification by Job Title

Relative to their composition in the sample (18 percent), African-American teaching staff were overrepresented as assistant teachers, accounting for 28 percent of assistant teachers but just 11 percent of teachers. Similarly, Hispanic/Latino teaching staff made up 14 percent of the teachers in the sample, yet 21 percent worked as assistant teachers. Conversely, white teaching staff, who accounted for 69 percent of teaching staff, were overrepresented in teaching roles, accounting for 75 percent of teachers.

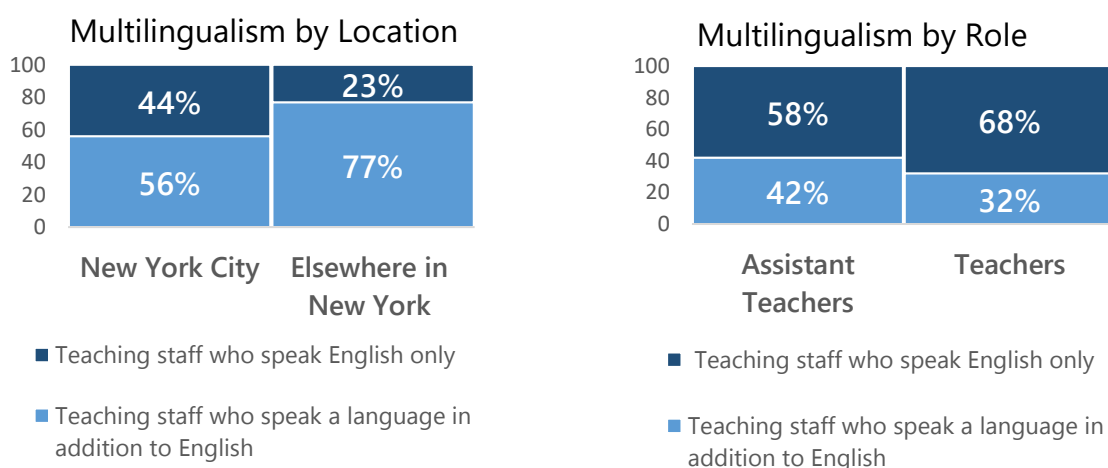
Country of Origin

Almost one-fifth (19 percent) of teaching staff were born outside the United States. The most commonly cited countries of origin were the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Jamaica, Nigeria, Pakistan, and the Philippines.

Languages Spoken

Teaching staff in the sample were linguistically diverse: 32 percent reported speaking a language in addition to English. Teaching staff in New York City were more likely than teaching staff elsewhere in the state of New York to speak another language as well as English (56 percent and 23 percent, respectively). Assistant teachers were more likely than teachers to speak another language (42 percent and 32 percent, respectively).

Figure 3



Family Characteristics

More than one-half (56 percent) of teaching staff in the sample reported their status as married or living with a partner. Around one-third of teaching staff reported having a child under the age of five (18 percent) or between the ages of six and 18 (35 percent) living in their household.

Professional Background

Education and Credentials

More than one-half (59 percent) of teaching staff in the sample had a bachelor's degree or higher. Of those with a degree, 35 percent majored in Early Childhood Education, 14 percent in Special Education, 12 percent in Elementary Education, and 4 percent in Child Development or Psychology. The remaining one-third (35 percent) held degrees in a range of other subjects.

Around 35 percent of teaching staff reported having a credential. The most frequently cited credentials were the New York State Teaching Certificate (24 percent), the Child Development Associate Certificate (15 percent), the New York State Early Childhood Special Education Teaching Certificate (11 percent), the Family Child Care Credential (11 percent), and the New York State Teaching Assistant Certificate (9 percent).

Student Loan Debt

Accruing student loan debt can compound teachers' economic insecurity, particularly in light of low wages. Among all teaching staff in the sample:

- 42% reported accruing student loan debt; and
- 52% of teaching staff who reported student loan debt had loans in excess of \$25,000.

Table 2. Debt Assumed, by Highest Level of Education Completed

Highest Degree Completed	Student Loan Debt
High school diploma or GED	8%
Some college credit but no degree	28%
Associate degree	37%
Bachelor's degree	58%
Master's degree	47%

Table 3. Student Loan Debt, by Position

Student Loans (Y/N)	Assistant Teacher	Teacher
Yes	36%	45%
No	64%	55%
Amount of Debt	Assistant Teacher	Teacher
Less than \$5,000	21%	14%
Between \$5,000 and \$10,000	13%	14%
Between \$10,001 and \$25,000	23%	19%
Between \$25,001 and \$50,000	21%	29%
More than \$50,000	22%	24%

Tenure

Over all, teaching staff represented a range of experience, from teachers new to the profession to those with many years working both in the field and at their current place of employment.

Table 4. Teaching Staff Tenure

Number of Years in the Field	Percent of Teaching Staff
5 years or less	29%
6-15 years	38%
16-20 years	13%
More than 20 years	20%
Number of Years at Current Place of Employment	
2 year or less	19%
3-10 years	50%
More than 10 years	31%
Number of Years in Current Position at Current Place of Employment	
2 years or less	32%
3-10 years	47%
More than 10 years	21%

Compensation

Wages

The median hourly wage of teaching staff in the SEQUAL study was \$14.00, with more than one-half (62 percent) of the sample indicating that they made \$15.00 an hour or less.

Assistant teachers in the sample reported earning a median hourly wage of \$11.13, and teachers reported a median hourly wage of \$15.00. For one-half of teaching staff (49 percent), all or almost all of their household income came from their work with children.

Spotlight: New York Cost of Living^x

The cost of living in both the city and state of New York is one of the highest nationwide.

According to the *2018 Early Childhood Workforce Index*, the New York state hourly median wage for child care workers in 2017 was \$12.38 and \$16.64 for preschool teachers, compared with

kindergarten and elementary-school teachers, who earned \$41.19 and \$44.60, respectively.^{xi} Though the wages reported in the *Index* are drawn from a larger swath of early educators, including those working in home-based settings, the wages among teaching staff in the SEQUAL sample are comparable. While kindergarten teachers hold a bachelor's degree, the median hourly wage for teaching staff with a bachelor's degree in our sample was \$14.00, reflecting a large gap in earnings.

Wages by Teacher Characteristics

While wages were low across the teaching staff in the sample — particularly in light of high levels of education — variations exist by:

- **Tenure:** Teachers who worked in the field for 20 years or more and at their current places of employment for more than 10 years were more likely to earn \$15.00 an hour or more, compared to teachers with less tenure.
- **Age of Children Served:** The median hourly wage for teaching staff working with infants and toddlers was \$12.80, for teachers of mixed-age groups, \$13.92, and for teachers of three- and four-year-olds, \$14.66.
- **Center Quality Rating:** Teaching staff working in four- and five-star centers were more likely to earn \$15.00 or more an hour.

Public Income Supports

Reflecting their low wages, 40 percent of teaching staff in the sample resided in families that utilized at least one form of federal public support,^{xii} a rate that is nearly double the national rate of participation for all workers. Among teaching staff in the sample who held a bachelor's degree or higher, 20 percent resided in families that utilized at least one form of federal public support.

Benefits

Health Care

Seventeen percent of teaching staff reported that they had no health coverage from any source. Those most likely to report not having health insurance included assistant teachers, teachers under age 30, and teachers who identify as black or African American. Among the 83 percent of teaching staff who had health coverage, less than one-half reported receiving insurance through their employer. Common sources of health insurance were coverage under the policy of a parent or spouse, coverage under Medicaid, or purchase of a policy through New York State of Health (the Affordable Care Act/Health Plan Marketplace).

Furthermore, 28 percent of teaching staff reported that in the past few years, they or a family member had gone without medical care due to the cost of treatment. Those likely to report that they or someone in their family went without medical treatment were teaching staff who do not have health insurance and made \$10.00 to \$15.00 an hour.

Vacation and Leave

A majority of staff members (84 percent) reported that they receive holidays and leave during the year. More than one-half the sample (55 percent) reported that their employer gave them a specific number of days off to be used for either vacation or sick leave. Although teaching staff reported a range, the median was eight days for holidays and 10 days for leave.

Program Leaders

In addition to providing information on the center's characteristics, program leaders shared information about their own personal and professional characteristics. While the person most likely to fill out the survey held an administrative position (73 percent), such as center director, assistant director, or site supervisor, almost one-quarter (27 percent) held another leadership role at the center, such as educational coordinator or teacher-director. All program leaders in our sample identified as female. Program leaders ranged in age from 30 to 75 years old, with a mean age of 51. Almost one-third of program leaders (33 percent) who filled out the survey worked in centers in New York City.

Program leaders as a group were less racially/ethnically diverse than teaching staff. One-fifth (20 percent) of program leaders were identified as people of color. Almost all program leaders (92 percent) held a bachelor's degree or higher, and around one-half (53 percent) majored in Early Childhood Education. Overall, program leaders had a wealth of experience in the field, with more than one-half (56 percent) working in the early care and education field for more than 20 years. The median hourly wage for center directors was \$24.00.

Compared to teaching staff, program leaders identifying as center director were less likely to have student loan debt. Of those who did have student loan debt (22 percent), most had debt in excess of \$25,000.

For a more detailed description of Program Leaders, please see Appendix B: Description of Program Leaders.

Comparisons Between Teaching Staff and Program Leaders

Note: Center directors (n=38) were used for comparison in the following tables.

Table 5. Educational Background, by Position

Highest Level of Education	Assistant Teacher	Teacher	Center Director
Less than a high school diploma or GED	1%	0%	0%
High school diploma or GED	15%	4%	0%
Some college credit but no degree	23%	10%	0%
Associate degree	23%	16%	3%
Bachelor's degree	29%	24%	34%
Master's degree	9%	46%	58%
Doctoral degree	0%	0%	5%
<i>Bachelor's degree or higher</i>	29%	70%	92%
Number of staff	116	195	38

Table 6. Race/Ethnicity, by Position

Race/Ethnicity	Assistant Teacher	Teacher	Center Director
White	58%	75%	86%
Black / African American	28%	11%	5%
Hispanic / Latino	21%	11%	0%
Other	7%	6%	3%
Asian	4%	5%	3%
Multiracial	3%	2%	3%

Table 7. Hourly Wage, by Position

Wage (Median)	Assistant Teacher	Teacher	Center Director
Hourly	\$11.13	\$15.00	\$24.00

A Guide to SEQUAL Findings

Teaching staff assessments of their work environments are reported separately for each of the five SEQUAL domains: Teaching Supports; Learning Community; Job Crafting; Adult Well-Being; and Program Leadership. For each domain, we begin with a description of the domain and why it is important to teacher practice and development. Within domains, findings are presented for each dimension (note that domains vary with regard to the number of dimensions).

Reporting on each domain is organized as follows:

Domain and Dimension Scores

- Mean scores, representing an aggregate of teaching staff responses, are provided for each SEQUAL dimension and domain. Results for each domain represent an aggregate of staff perceptions across sites, and therefore, the prevalence of issues identified will vary by site. Means are calculated according to a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Unless noted, higher scores reflect that a positive work environment condition is in place or can be reliably depended upon.
- A graphic follows the domain score, representing the strength or weakness of the domain in relationship to the mean score.

What Teaching Staff Said

- Percentage of teaching staff who agree or disagree with individual items describing various workplace policies, practices, and relationships related to a given dimension (see “Interpreting Agreement and Disagreement With SEQUAL Items,” p. 23).

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Implications of teaching staff assessments.

Findings by Site and Teacher Characteristics

- Relationship between SEQUAL domain and dimension scores and program characteristics, including the center’s star rating, observed quality ratings as measured by ECERS and ITERS, location, and age of children served.
- Relationship between SEQUAL domain and dimension scores and teacher characteristics, including position, tenure, and age group in the classroom.



Interpreting Agreement and Disagreement With SEQUAL Items

The SEQUAL survey presents statements, and teaching staff are asked to indicate agreement or disagreement. In almost all cases, teaching staff agreement with an item signals that a positive work environment condition is in place or can be reliably depended upon, while disagreement indicates a lack of support for various work environment conditions necessary for teachers to apply their knowledge and skills and continue to hone their practice. We note the few instances in which agreement signals a less-supportive environment.

All SEQUAL items are rated on a six-point scale, with designations of “strongly agree,” “agree,” “somewhat agree,” “somewhat disagree,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree.” Throughout the report, “agree” combines both strongly agree and agree responses. Likewise, “disagree” combines both strongly disagree and disagree responses. “Somewhat disagree” and “somewhat agree” are handled differently depending on the item and the meaning that the responses convey. We sometimes combine the somewhat responses with the overall agree or disagree items, while at other times we report out the percentage of staff who “somewhat agree” or “disagree,” if we determine that the additional detail provides greater understanding of the item.

On a few items, we combine somewhat agree with disagree responses. For example, when teaching staff respond that they “somewhat agree” that they have access to a working computer, the somewhat designation suggests that a computer it is not dependably available. In our judgment, “somewhat agree” in this case would not be considered agreement. For example, if staff “somewhat agree” that bullying is not tolerated in their program, it signals that bullying may be tolerated under some conditions. Similarly, when teaching staff indicate they “somewhat agree” or “somewhat disagree” that bullying is tolerated among staff at their workplace, we interpret somewhat responses negatively because they signal some degree of tolerance for behavior that is detrimental to teaching staff.



FINDINGS

The page features a large, abstract graphic at the bottom consisting of several overlapping diagonal stripes. From top-left to bottom-right, the stripes are: a light blue stripe, a medium blue stripe, a yellow stripe, and a dark blue stripe. The stripes are separated by thin white gaps.



DOMAIN 1: TEACHING SUPPORTS

Domain Score:
4.32/6

The Teaching Supports domain includes a range of workplace tools that influence teaching practice. Varied in nature — ranging from specific materials and resources to levels of staffing and dedicated time for observation, planning, and sharing with colleagues — teaching supports constitute essential conditions for enabling teaching staff to apply their knowledge and skills. When such supports are missing or undependable, their absence undermines efforts to improve or sustain program quality and places additional burdens on the complex and demanding work of teaching, which includes meeting the varied needs of individual children in the classroom.

Dimension 1: Curriculum

Score: 4.70/6

The Curriculum dimension examines whether a program has articulated an approach to guide teacher practice and assesses whether teachers consider themselves adequately trained to apply the approach or curriculum to their planning and teaching.

What Teaching Staff Said

Most teaching staff reported that their program had a curriculum in place that tied directly to daily activities in the classroom.

- Nearly all teaching staff (**95 percent**) reported that their program had a curriculum in place to guide children’s learning and teaching practices.
- Most teaching staff (**80 percent**) agreed that they can explain how daily activities are a part of their program’s curriculum.

While the majority of staff members agreed that their program’s curriculum helped them in the classroom, a substantial portion of teaching staff disagreed.

- Though roughly two-thirds (**64 percent**) of teaching staff reported receiving training in how to use their program’s curriculum, **36 percent** disagreed that such training was reliably available.
- While **65 percent** of teaching staff agreed that their program’s curriculum was helpful in deciding how to teach and plan for individual children’s needs, more than one-third (**35 percent**) of teaching staff disagreed or only somewhat agreed.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Curriculum provides teaching teams with an organizing framework that identifies and guides the content and processes teaching staff follow to reach specific learning outcomes.
- In the absence of a curriculum or in the case of a curriculum that is not well understood or utilized, teaching staff pursue various instructional approaches that may work at cross purposes, making it more difficult to achieve learning outcomes.
- A supportive work environment provides ongoing training and support to ensure that teaching staff can implement curriculum effectively.

Dimension 2: Child Observation and Assessment Score: 4.70/6

The Child Observation and Assessment dimension examines the training, support, and resources teaching staff are provided to assist them in understanding and recording children's behavior and development.

What Teaching Staff Said

Nearly all teaching staff reported regularly conducting observations and agreed that there was a process in place for assessing children's learning and development within their program.

- Almost all teaching staff reported that their program had a process in place for assessing children's development and learning (**93 percent**), and most staff members agreed that they regularly conduct assessments (**82 percent**), which help them to decide what the children in their classrooms need (**83 percent**).

Fewer staff members agreed they had received training on how to use assessments and observations to talk with families about their children or that they receive ongoing guidance on how to use this information to inform their teaching.

- Less than two-thirds of teaching staff agreed that they have been trained on how to use assessments and observations to talk with families about their children (**65 percent**), or that they receive ongoing guidance on how to use the information from assessments and observations in their teaching (**61 percent**).

Spotlight: Child Observation

Just 49 percent of teaching staff reported having enough time each week to carefully observe children.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Observations and assessments provide valuable information about children's development that can be used to tailor teaching strategies to support individual children's socioemotional, physical, and cognitive development.
- When teaching staff are not well trained or provided adequate time to complete observations and assessments, inaccurate conclusions may be drawn about children's current abilities or progress towards developmental milestones, and/or developmental delays requiring specialized interventions may not be identified.

Dimension 3: Materials and Equipment

Score: 4.64/6

The Materials and Equipment dimension examines whether the equipment, toys, and consumable supplies available are appropriate, accessible, and kept in good condition.

What Teaching Staff Said

One-quarter of teaching staff reported access to appropriate equipment and materials for children and staff as unreliable.

- **27 percent** reported availability of a working computer/printer for staff use at their program as unreliable.
- **21 percent** reported that equipment and materials appropriate to the needs of children in their classrooms were not reliably available.

The distribution of materials and supplies across classrooms and timely repair or replacement of broken equipment were areas of concern.

- Less than one-half (**47 percent**) of teaching staff reported that equipment and materials are quickly repaired or replaced when broken.
- One-third (**36 percent**) of teaching staff disagreed or only somewhat agreed that materials and supplies within their program are shared fairly across classrooms.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Classroom materials are essential in creating an enriching and engaging environment that allows children to explore, play, and learn.
- When children do not have access to appropriate materials, it may impact their physical, socioemotional, and cognitive development.
- Teaching staff need access to materials and equipment (such as computers, printers, and copy machines) in order to prepare instructional materials, access online resources, engage in online professional development activities, and increasingly, communicate with families.

Dimension 4: Support Services for Children and Families Score: 4.46/6

The Support Services dimension examines the training, resources, and assistance available to enable teaching staff to respond to the individual needs of the children and families in their program.

What Teaching Staff Said

In the event of an issue with children or families, one-quarter of teaching staff reported a shortage of available support from supervisors or coworkers.

- Nearly one-third (**31 percent**) of teaching staff reported that in the event of a problem with a family, their ability to rely on supervisors or coworkers for help was inconsistent.
- **28 percent** reported the support of supervisors or coworkers in the event of a problem with a child as unreliable.

Resources related to supporting family needs — including training in teaching children who exhibit challenging behaviors, training in supporting dual language learners, and assistance in communicating with families when there is a language barrier — were reported as less reliable.

- **64 percent** reported that training for teaching children who are dual language learners was inconsistently available.
- **47 percent** of teaching staff rated the availability of training for supporting family needs and training in teaching children with challenging behaviors as insufficient.
- **46 percent** disagreed or only somewhat agreed that if they had a problem communicating due to a language barrier, outside resources were available to assist.

Spotlight: Support Resources

The lack of resources to assist teaching staff in supporting the unique needs of children and families, including those of dual language learners and children with challenging behaviors, highlights an issue endemic throughout the field.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Teaching staff need additional training, support, and often, access to outside resources (such as mental health or developmental consultations) to effectively meet the needs of children and their families.
- Support from coworkers and supervisors is an important element in ensuring effective interactions with children and families, but may not be sufficient in some instances.
- Addressing the needs of children and families who speak a language other than English is impaired when teaching staff cannot communicate with them directly or through a translator or when staff have not been trained in adapting to these children's unique needs.

Dimension 5: Staffing and Professional Responsibilities Score: 3.82/6

The Staffing and Professional Responsibilities dimension examines the stability of teaching staff and the extent to which they are trained to meet their responsibilities. This dimension also examines how much time teaching staff have for planning, peer-to-peer discussion, attention to individual children, and completion of required paperwork.

What Teaching Staff Said

Teaching staff responses revealed shortages in staff coverage.

- Less than one-half of teaching staff agreed that there are enough staff available to help during breaks (**45 percent**) or to give children individual attention (**40 percent**).
- Just **37 percent** agreed that there are trained substitutes/floaters available to help.

A lack of trained staff within programs may be exacerbated by teaching staff turnover.

- Only one-half (**50 percent**) of teaching staff agreed that in the event of turnover, everything possible would be done to hire qualified new staff.
 - **33 percent** of staff agreed that if turnover were to occur, new staff would be hired quickly.
- “The number one challenge we face is not having enough staff; the first thing taken away when there is a coverage issue is our planning time. When we are given planning time, we can use our observations, plan thoughtful lessons, and assess development. When we are not given any time, everything must be thought of and done on the fly.”**
- Infant-Toddler Teacher,
Five-Star Center

Professional responsibilities essential to effective teaching are challenging to accomplish during the paid workday when coverage is insufficient, as teaching staff responses indicate.

- Only **41 percent** of teaching staff reported having dedicated time, without responsibility for children, to discuss work-related issues with other teachers.
- **23 percent** reported that in the last week, they had paid time, without responsibility for children, for planning.
- Just **19 percent** reported that in the last week, they had paid time, without responsibility for children, for doing paperwork for their job.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Each classroom needs an appropriate number of trained staff consistently in place in order to meet children’s immediate needs and to allow teaching staff to fulfill their other responsibilities related to curriculum and assessments.
- When staffing in a classroom is insufficient or unreliable, it challenges the ability of educators to attend to individual children’s needs or to provide a stable and nurturing learning environment for all of the children in their care.
- Teaching staff need dedicated time, without child responsibilities, to plan curriculum, conduct observations and assessments, share with one another, and complete required paperwork.

Variations in Teaching Supports Findings by Site and Teacher Characteristics

To further explore the meaning of teaching staff assessments of their work environments, we explored variations in how SEQUAL scores for the Teaching Supports domain and dimensions varied by site and teacher characteristics. Specifically, we examined differences among teaching staff employed in QUALITYstarsNY-rated centers by different star levels, centers located in New York City and elsewhere in the state of New York, and centers serving infants, toddlers, and older children and those serving older children, exclusively. We also examined differences in ratings based on teaching staff position, years employed at the center, age groups served, and race and ethnicity. Only significant findings for the domain and dimensions are reported below.

Variations by Site Characteristics

Teaching Supports Overall Domain Scores

Differences in scores for the Teaching Supports domain were found by center rating.^{xiii} Three-star centers scored significantly lower than five-star centers (mean scores of 4.10/6 and 4.50/6, respectively) on the Teaching Supports domain. The differences in mean scores for teaching staff working in one- and two-star centers (4.25/6) and four-star (4.38/6) centers were not statistically significant.

Teaching Supports Dimension Scores

- On the Materials dimension, which examines whether the equipment, toys, and consumable supplies available are appropriate, accessible, and in good condition, differences were found by center rating.^{xiv} Five-star centers on average scored the highest on this dimension, followed by four-star centers, then one- and two-star centers, with three-star centers receiving the lowest mean score. Statistically significant differences were found between three-star (4.42/6) and five-star (4.89/6) centers. The mean scores for teaching staff working in one- and two-star centers (4.44/6) and four-star centers (4.72/6) were not statistically significant.
- Of note, teaching staff working in three-star centers were less likely to report having a working computer and printer for staff available in their center (64 percent), compared to 77 percent of teaching staff in five-star centers.

Variations by Teaching Staff Characteristics

Teaching Supports Overall Domain Scores

There were no significant differences on overall Teaching Staff Domain scores by staff characteristics. Individual dimension differences are noted below.

Teaching Supports Dimension Scores

- On the Staffing dimension, which assesses adequacy of coverage to meet children's needs and to allow teaching staff to complete other professional responsibilities, differences were found among teaching staff by position.^{xv} Assistant teachers reported higher mean scores (4.26/6) compared to teachers (3.85/6), indicating that teachers who often have additional professional responsibilities for planning and reporting may experience insufficient coverage to allow completion of their other professional duties.



Domain Score:

DOMAIN 2: LEARNING COMMUNITY 4.10/6

The Learning Community domain addresses conditions that strengthen and refine teaching practice. Encompassing issues of policy, practice, and relationships, a professional learning community involves opportunities to participate in relevant training, occasion to practice emerging skills, and encouragement for testing new strategies and ideas. Effective learning and implementation of new approaches to teaching requires engagement among colleagues across all roles in the organization. When learning opportunities fail to address classroom challenges, allow for opportunities to practice and reflect, or engage all members of the team, adult learning and organizational improvement are stalled and less likely to be sustained.

Dimension 1: Professional Development Opportunities Score: 3.85/6

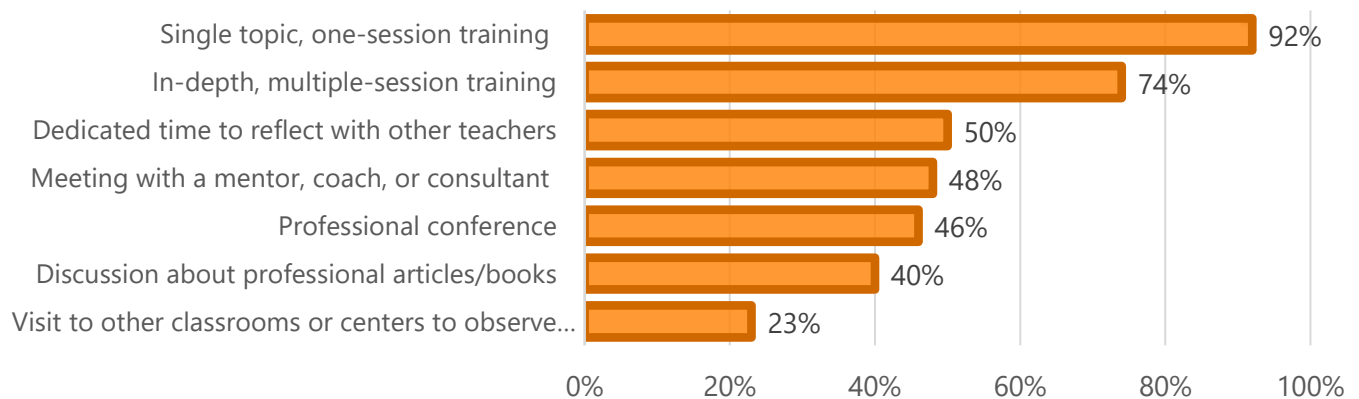
The Professional Development Opportunities dimension examines types of professional learning experiences and supports available to teaching staff.

What Teaching Staff Said

Teaching staff were asked whether they had participated in any professional development activities over the past year and, if so, to indicate the types of activities (see **Figure 4**).

Figure 4

Professional Development Opportunities



While almost all teaching staff (**92 percent**) agreed that they had participated in at least one professional learning opportunity in the past year, just **50 percent** reported having a choice in the form of professional development in which they took part.

Access to professional learning opportunities is limited by personal cost burden and a lack of flexibility in employer scheduling.

- **41 percent** of teaching staff disagreed or only somewhat agreed that in the past year, their employer paid for a portion of their professional development expenses.
- About one-half (**48 percent**) of staff reported that in the past year, the ability to adjust their work schedule to participate in professional development opportunities was unreliable.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Adult learners find learning experiences to be most meaningful when they participate in the design or selection of these activities.
- Conducting professional development activities during paid work hours — or providing a stipend for engaging in these experiences outside of work hours — demonstrates an employer’s commitment to ongoing learning and reduces the personal financial burden associated with these activities. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) recommended in 2018 that payment for professional development and education not be the responsibility of teachers, given their low wages.

Dimension 2: Applying Learning

Score: 4.36/6

The Applying Learning dimension examines teaching staff assessments of opportunities and support for trying new approaches to teaching and examines how staff stability and relationships may interfere with trying new approaches.

What Teaching Staff Said

Most staff members agreed that they feel comfortable trying new approaches to teaching, however, fewer agreed that their coworkers support them doing so. Staff dynamics and stability were other factors that make it difficult to explore new methods of teaching. Taken together, these conditions reveal that many barriers may be inhibiting teachers from their exploration of new teaching methods.

- Though most staff members (**73 percent**) reported feeling comfortable trying new approaches to teaching, nearly one-half (**44 percent**) disagreed or only somewhat agreed that *other* teachers in their classroom are also interested in exploring new styles.
- **53 percent** agreed or somewhat agreed that frequent staff changes make it difficult to try new ways to teach.
- **20 percent** of teaching staff reported that staff conflicts in their classroom make it difficult to apply new approaches.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- In order for teaching staff to be able to translate learning experiences into teaching practice, they need to feel supported in experimenting with new ideas and concepts.
- When a work environment is unstable, either due to internal conflict and/or staff turnover, it creates a barrier to quality improvement and undermines investments in training and professional development.
- In order to integrate learning experiences into real-world applications, teaching staff need opportunities for reflection, peer-to-peer learning, and observation of other classrooms.

Variations in Learning Community Findings by Site and Teacher Characteristics

To further explore the meaning of teaching staff assessments of their work environments, we examined variations in how SEQUAL scores for the Learning Community domain and dimensions varied by site and teacher characteristics. Specifically, we examined differences among teaching staff employed in QUALITYstarsNY-rated centers by different star levels, centers located in New York City and elsewhere in the state of New York, and centers serving infants, toddlers, and older children and those serving older children, exclusively. We also examined differences in ratings based on teaching staff position, years employed at the center, age groups served, and race and ethnicity. Only significant findings for the domain and dimensions are presented below.

Variations by Site Characteristics

Learning Community Overall Domain Scores

- On the overall domain of Learning Community, which addresses conditions that strengthen and refine teaching practice, differences were found by center rating.^{xvi} On average, five-star centers scored the highest overall, followed by four-star centers, then one- and two-star centers, with three-star centers receiving the lowest mean score. Statistically significant differences were found between mean scores of teaching staff working in three-star (3.75/6) vs. four- (4.14/6) and five-star (4.34) centers. The differences in mean scores for teaching staff working in one- and two-star centers (4.13/6) in comparison to other groups were not statistically significant.

Learning Community Dimension Scores

- On the Professional Development dimension, which examines the types of professional learning experiences and supports available to teaching staff, differences were found by center rating.^{xvii} Significant differences were found between three-star centers (3.31/6) compared to one- and two-star (3.98/6), four-star (3.83), and five-star (4.28/6) centers. Teaching staff working at three-star centers assessed their opportunities for learning and to strengthen their teaching practice less positively than teaching staff working in other rated centers.
- Of note, around one-third (37 percent) of teaching staff working in three-star centers reported having a choice in the professional development in which they participated, compared to 68 percent of teaching staff in five-star centers.

Variations by Teaching Staff Characteristics

Learning Community Overall Domain Scores

There were no significant differences in Learning Community Domain scores by staff characteristics. Individual dimension differences are noted below.

Learning Community Dimension Scores

- On the dimension of Applying Learning, which examines opportunities and supports for trying new approaches to teaching and sharing ideas with other teaching staff, differences were found between teaching staff working with younger children (e.g., infants and toddlers) compared to those working with older children (e.g., three- and four-year-olds) or mixed age groups.^{xviii} Teaching staff working with younger children reported having fewer opportunities and less-positive relationships with staff in their classroom, which limited their ability to apply their teaching practice.



DOMAIN 3: JOB CRAFTING

Domain Score:

4.22/6

The Job Crafting domain focuses on workplace practices and relationships that support individual teaching staff in expressing how their work is done and sharing decisions that impact their classrooms and the larger organization. When teaching staff consider themselves part of a well-functioning team and feel they have a meaningful say in how their classrooms operate, they are more able to engage in the reflection, creative problem-solving, and innovation necessary for continuous quality improvement. Both morale and performance improve in workplaces where employees feel well informed about program policies and changes and can identify that there is a clear process for giving input into organization-wide decisions that impact their day-to-day jobs. When teamwork and avenues for input are lacking or input is not seriously considered, morale and engagement decrease, while turnover increases.

Dimension 1: Decision Making

Score: 4.33/6

The Decision Making dimension examines the authority or input that teaching staff have on classroom composition and on establishing and adjusting schedules.

What Teaching Staff Said

Though most staff members made decisions on classroom composition and their materials, a substantial number indicated less autonomy in shifting planned activities and hosting visitors.

- The majority of staff members (**74 percent**) reported the ability to choose materials and arrange their classroom space.
- Many staff members (**70 percent**) reported freedom of choice in making changes to planned activities when needed, though notably, nearly one-third (**30 percent**) of teaching staff did not.
- Fewer staff members (**31 percent**) reported choice in when outside observations, excluding visits from families, were made in their classroom.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Children’s developmental needs are constantly changing, and teaching staff need to feel comfortable adjusting their environment and teaching strategies frequently, based on their observations and professional assessments. Teaching staff need to know that they have relative autonomy to make decisions about materials, room arrangement, and planned activities.
- Outside visitors may impact the activities and schedule within a classroom, and teaching staff need to identify optimal times for visitors to conduct observations.

Dimension 2: Teamwork

Score: 4.88/6

The Teamwork dimension examines teaching staff assessments of coworkers' respect for one another's opinions and whether they collaborate effectively in planning and implementing learning experiences for children.

What Teaching Staff Said

While most staff members reported working well together as a team in the *classroom*, fractures at the *program* level related to fair consideration and fair treatment were identified.

- Most staff members (**79 percent**) agreed that teaching staff in their classrooms consider themselves to be part of a team, and **68 percent** reported that teaching staff in their own classroom work well with those in other classrooms.
- One-quarter (**27 percent**) of teaching staff disagreed or only somewhat agreed that all teaching staff are responsible for their share of the work.
- **22 percent** disagreed or only somewhat agreed that the opinions of all teaching staff in their program are considered fairly.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Each early educator has their own unique philosophy and perspective on how to achieve learning outcomes for children. An effective, high-quality classroom begins with a teaching team that respects one another's approaches and teaching styles and works together to meet the needs of their children and families.
- Effective teamwork contributes to classroom and program stability by improving teachers' effectiveness and job satisfaction. Cultivating this camaraderie requires dedicated paid time for professional sharing and peer-to-peer learning among teaching staff.
- Conflict within a program, at the classroom or administrative level, may occur when different ideas and approaches are not acknowledged and respected. In severe cases, animosity or conflict among staff may be noticed by children and adversely affect classroom behavior and learning opportunities.

Dimension 3: Input

Score: 3.47/6

The Input dimension examines teaching staff perceptions related to the ability to influence work policies that impact their practices.

What Teaching Staff Said

Teaching staff reported being kept well informed on administrative policies, but received fewer opportunities for input into decisions that directly impacted their classrooms and practice.

- While **63 percent** of teaching staff agreed they are kept well informed on program *policies*, less than one-half (**47 percent**) agreed they are kept well informed of program *changes*.
- **63 percent** of teaching staff reported having input into decisions about the classroom in which they would be teaching.
- Far fewer staff members (**21 percent**) reported receiving input into children's classroom placements.

Spotlight: Program Input

Just 34 percent of teaching staff agreed that staff input into program policies is taken seriously.

Teaching staff received limited opportunities to contribute to decisions that affected all staff members and their work.

- **34 percent** of teaching staff reported that there was a clear process for teaching staff to have a say in decisions that impact their work.
- **29 percent** of teaching staff agreed that all teaching staff are invited to have input into program policies that affect everyone.
- Almost three-quarters (**74 percent**) of teaching staff disagreed or somewhat disagreed that teaching staff have input into how funds or resources are used.

“We should have more input on program policies that directly affect teachers.”

-Teacher of 4-year-olds,
Two-Star Center

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Having clear information on the areas of program and classroom decisions in which teaching staff can provide input is an important component to creating a supportive work environment.
- Opportunities to make decisions or to provide input on staff and child assignments, scheduling, room arrangement, and curriculum provides teaching staff with a needed level of control over their classrooms and the learning environments they create.
- Based on their direct knowledge and experience, teaching staff are a valuable resource in determining the appropriate classroom and teachers for children.
- Teaching staff provide a unique perspective on classroom and program needs and should be consulted on prioritizing how resources are used and what materials or supplies are needed.
- Failure to consider or respect teaching staff perspectives impacts staff morale and can lead to decreased job satisfaction and an increase in staff turnover.

Variations in Job Crafting Findings by Site and Teacher Characteristics

To further explore the meaning of teaching staff assessments of their work environments, we examined variations in how SEQUAL scores for the Job Crafting domain and dimensions varied by site and teacher characteristics. Specifically, we examined differences among teaching staff employed in QUALITYstarsNY-rated centers by different star levels, centers located in New York City and elsewhere in the state of New York, and centers serving infants, toddlers, and older children and those serving older children, exclusively. We also examined differences in ratings based on teaching staff position, years employed at the center, age groups served, and race and ethnicity. Only significant findings for the domain and dimensions are reported below.

Variations by Site Characteristics

Job Crafting Overall Domain Scores

There were no significant differences in Job Crafting Domain scores by site characteristics. Individual dimension differences are noted below.

Job Crafting Dimension Scores

- On the dimension of Teamwork, which examines assessments of coworkers' respect for another's opinions and whether they collaborate effectively in planning and implementing learning experiences for children, differences were found by center rating.^{xix} With regard to the center's star rating, significant differences were found between three-star (4.62/6) and four-star (5.10/6) centers, indicating that teaching staff in three-star programs are less likely to consider themselves part of a team than those working in four-star programs.

Variations by Teaching Staff Characteristics

Job Crafting Overall Domain Scores

There were no significant differences in Job Crafting Domain scores by staff characteristics. Individual dimension differences are noted below.

Job Crafting Dimension Scores

- On the Decision Making dimension, which examines teaching staff input into classroom composition and schedules, differences were found by position.^{xx} Assistant teachers (3.83/6) assessed their work environments less positively than teachers (4.65/6) in this dimension.
- On the Input dimension, which examines teaching staff perceptions related to the ability to influence work policies that impact their practice, teaching staff working with younger age groups (e.g., infants and toddlers) rated their opportunity to give input less positively compared to teaching staff working with older children.^{xxi}



DOMAIN 4: ADULT WELL-BEING

Domain Score:

4.14/6

The Adult Well-Being domain encompasses the economic security and wellness of teaching staff, as well as their interactions with one another, all of which are influenced by policies, practices, and relationships. Low pay and inadequate benefits common to most early childhood jobs contribute to financial worry and insecurity among many staff members. Poor compensation is often exacerbated by expectations to complete job tasks during unpaid time or to work when ill, undependable breaks or schedules, and the absence of financial reward for professional advancement. Teaching young children is physically demanding work, which also includes continual exposure to illness, and requires that teaching staff be trained to protect their health and assured appropriate ergonomic equipment as well as adequate sick leave and vacations.

The tenor of relationships among colleagues in a site is another important contributor to teacher well-being, influencing the ability of staff to work effectively as a team. In a climate of respect and fairness, well-being can protect against or even alleviate stress, but such dynamics as favoritism and unresolved conflict can exacerbate it. In addition, children's well-being and learning are directly influenced by the emotional and physical well-being experienced by the adults primarily responsible for their education and care. When adults experience high levels of stress, there is a greater likelihood that they will be unable to engage children in developmentally supportive interactions that contribute to their learning.

Dimension 1: Economic Well-Being

Score: 4.02/6

The Economic Well-Being dimension examines the dependability of workplace pay and benefit policies (e.g., receiving paid time for work responsibilities and professional development) and the degree to which teaching staff worry about financial security (e.g., their ability to afford food for their families and housing and retirement costs).

What Teaching Staff Said

About Economic Worry

Note that for items related to economic worry, stronger agreement, rather than disagreement, indicated higher levels of worry.

Teaching staff reported concern about their ability to pay for basic living expenses.

- Most staff members (**70 percent**) reported worrying about paying housing costs.
- One-half (**50 percent**) of teaching staff reported that they worry about paying for daily expenses, including transportation to and from work.

Worry about the ability to provide for themselves and their families was widespread.

- **78 percent** of teaching staff reported worrying about having enough to pay their family's monthly bills.
- **70 percent** reported that they worry about paying for their household's routine health care costs.
- **60** of teaching staff reported worry about losing pay if they or someone in their family became ill or worry about taking time off from work to take care of family issues (**54 percent**).

Spotlight: Food Insecurity

Fifty percent of teaching staff worry about having enough food to feed their family on a monthly basis.

Most staff members did not see their jobs as a likely source for improving their financial situation in the long term. In fact, across the board, compensation and long-term financial well-being were reflected as common worries.

- **75 percent** reported uncertainty about not getting a raise.
- Nearly all teaching staff (**89 percent**) agreed or somewhat agreed that they worry about having enough savings for retirement.

A sizeable proportion of teaching staff reported work reliability and job security as an area of worry.

- **44 percent** of teaching staff reported that they worry about having their job benefits reduced, while close to one-third (**29 percent**) reported concern about getting laid off from work or having their hours reduced.
- One in three staff members (**36 percent**) reported worrying about being sent home without pay if child attendance is low or if their program has an unexpected closure.

What Teaching Staff Said

About Dependability of Policies

In the following section, “disagree” and “somewhat agree” are interpreted as negative responses and an indication of a lack of reliability of policies. Therefore, in the percentages that follow, “disagree” and “somewhat agree” ratings have been reported in combination.

Many staff members reported compensation for professional development and job-related activities outside of work hours as undependable.

- Nearly three-quarters (**71 percent**) of teaching staff reported that they could not depend on compensation for routine professional activities, including work outside of regular work hours, parent conferences, and evening or weekend events.
- Less than one-half of teaching staff surveyed agreed they could depend on increased compensation for completing a degree (**48 percent**) or for being promoted to a position with more responsibility (**44 percent**).
- More than one-third of teaching staff (**37 percent**) reported that payment for any required professional development activities was unreliable.

Opportunities for teaching staff to take paid time off, take time off when ill, or even take their paid breaks, were resources that could not be depended on.

- **52 percent** of teaching staff assessed the ability to take paid breaks during their workday as undependable, although required by law in most instances.
- Less than one-half (**46 percent**) of teaching staff agreed they could depend on having planning time during their paid work hours when they were not responsible for children.
- **44 percent** assessed the ability to take paid vacation time as undependable.
- One-third (**36 percent**) of teaching staff reported that they could not depend on taking paid time off for holidays or using their paid sick leave when ill (**32 percent**).

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- An important skill for teachers is the ability to have intentional interactions with children, requiring them to remain focused and present in the moment. Economic insecurity can cause significant stress and distract teachers from focusing on children's needs.
- A supportive teacher work environment recognizes the need for dedicated prep time and sets aside time and/or financial resources to support the professional responsibilities of teaching staff.
- The stress caused by low pay and inadequate benefits is often exacerbated by expectations to complete job tasks during unpaid time or to work when ill, as teaching staff cannot afford to take time off. Undependable breaks or schedules and the absence of financial reward for professional advancement can also serve as additional stressors and drive turnover.
- Regular breaks are necessary for all workers, and early educators are no exception. In a field in which teaching staff are required to be alert and responsive to children throughout the day, it is important for programs to have practices in place that ensure teaching staff can depend on regular breaks and can stay home when they are ill. Paid leave for vacation and holidays are also key policies that help to alleviate stress and prevent staff burnout.

Dimension 2: Wellness Supports

Score: 4.49/6

The Wellness Supports domain examines the conditions and training available in the work environment to ensure safety and security for teaching staff.

What Teaching Staff Said

One in five staff members reported that equipment and policies designed to support teacher health and minimize the likelihood of injury were not routinely available in their program.

- One quarter (**25 percent**) disagreed or only somewhat agreed that essential health materials, such as disposable gloves or aprons, were available without cost to teaching staff.
- Approximately one in five staff members disagreed or only somewhat agreed that their program provides adult-size equipment (**21 percent**) or implements security measures (e.g., good lighting, locks) to ensure staff safety (**22 percent**).

Spotlight: Personal Safety and Space

Forty percent of teaching staff disagreed or only somewhat agreed that their program provided safe places to put their personal belongings or had a staff room for breaks or private conversation.

Many staff members reported working in settings with insufficient supports to workplace cleanliness and physical comfort.

- **40 percent** of staff disagreed or only somewhat agreed that their program arranges for classrooms to be cleaned by someone other than a member of the teaching staff.
- **38 percent** disagreed or only somewhat agreed that their program provides comfortable places for adults to sit and be with children.

Training to help prevent staff injury and illness and to support healthy behaviors was not universally available or comprehensive.

- Although nearly three-fourths (**72 percent**) of teaching staff agreed that their program provides training for staff about healthy ways to perform tasks — such as preparing food, lifting children, and moving heavy objects — nearly one-third (**28 percent**) did not.
- Meanwhile, just one-third of teaching staff (**34 percent**) agreed that their program provides training for teaching staff on managing stress, healthy eating, and exercise.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Teaching staff need a supportive and safe environment with appropriate space and furnishings, break rooms, and secure places for their belongings. These are basic accommodations that contribute to teachers' feelings of security and well-being at work.
- Teaching in early education settings is an emotionally and physically demanding profession. Teaching staff need support in managing stress and living a healthy lifestyle.
- Teachers face multiple demands throughout the day, and when teachers are not provided support and opportunities to manage responsibilities, the system is susceptible to heightened staff turnover, which ultimately undermines program quality.

Dimension 3: Quality of Work Life

Score: 4.32/6

The Quality of Work Life domain examines how well teaching staff are supported and treated by other adults in their work environment.

What Teaching Staff Said

Interpersonal relationships greatly influence how teaching staff experience their jobs, with most staff members agreeing that they are treated with respect and support by coworkers.

- **92 percent** reported that their coworkers value their beliefs about teaching children, and **90 percent** said that their coworkers support them when they have personal issues.
- Almost all staff members (**89 percent**) agreed or somewhat agreed that their coworkers treat them with respect.

This positive assessment, however, belies negative dynamics perceived by many staff members.

Fairness in the Workplace

- **50%** of teaching staff agreed that all staff are held responsible for doing their share of work, suggesting that the other half of teaching staff may witness or experience issues of unfair expectations or unequal distribution of workload.
- Just **45%** of teaching staff agreed that no staff members receive preferential treatment at the expense of others.
- Only **43%** of teaching staff disagreed or only somewhat agreed that bullying by other adults is not tolerated in their program, suggesting that some staff members may be experiencing or observing intimidating interactions among staff members in their program.
- **38%** agreed that they are confident that their complaints (if voiced) would be considered fairly.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- In high-quality work environments, teaching staff feel that they are respected and treated fairly by their coworkers and leaders. When teaching staff work in a climate that allows bullying, includes favoritism, or has staff conflicts, it can create or exacerbate existing stress.
- When teaching staff perceive that their work is not valued or that others are being allowed to not meet their job responsibilities, it creates divisions among staff and/or program leaders that adversely affect job performance and staff morale. These conditions can have a direct impact on interactions with children and the ability to create a nurturing environment, undercutting staff morale, contributing to turnover, and undermining program quality.

Variations in Adult Well-Being Findings by Site and Teacher Characteristics

To further explore the meaning of teaching staff assessments of their work environments, we examined variation in how SEQUAL scores for the Adult Well-Being domain and dimensions varied by site and teacher characteristics. Specifically, we examined differences among teaching staff employed in QUALITYstarsNY-rated centers by different star levels, centers located in New York City and elsewhere in the state of New York, and centers serving infants, toddlers, and older children and those serving older children, exclusively. We also examined differences in ratings based on teaching staff position, years employed at the center, age groups served, and race and ethnicity. Only significant findings for the domain and dimensions are reported below.

Variations by Site Characteristics

Adult Well-Being Overall Domain Scores

- In the overall Adult Well-Being domain, differences were found by region.^{xxii} Teaching staff working in centers in New York City had higher mean scores (4.30/6) compared to teaching staff working in centers elsewhere in the state of New York (4.08/6).

- Of note, SEQUAL scores on the Adult Well-Being domain were the lowest of all domains, and there was no variation by star rating, suggesting that adult well-being is a problem across all programs. Furthermore, teaching staff did not differ on key characteristics, including position and age of children served, suggesting that economic worry may impact the majority of teaching staff.

Adult Well-Being Dimension Scores

There were no significant differences in Adult Well-Being dimension scores by site characteristics.

Variations by Teaching Staff Characteristics

Adult Well-Being Overall Domain Scores:

In the overall Adult Well-Being domain, differences were found by number of years employed at the center.^{xxiii} Significant differences were found between teaching staff who had worked at the same place of employment for two years or less (3.89/6) and those who had worked 10 or more years (4.35/6).

Adult Well-Being Dimension Scores

There were no significant differences in Adult Well-Being dimension scores by staff characteristics.



Domain Score:

DOMAIN 5: PROGRAM LEADERSHIP 4.28/6

The Program Leadership domain focuses on teaching staff assessments of other staff members who fulfill leadership functions that provide support and guidance to teacher practice. In center-based early care and education programs, leaders fulfill multiple functions. Here, we focus on supervision of teaching staff and oversight for daily operations of the site, which may be functions fulfilled by more than one person in a given site. When leaders are knowledgeable about child development and pedagogy, engaged in learning themselves, considered to be accessible and fair, and committed to listening to and responding to staff concerns, they create a workplace climate that supports staff morale and encourages innovation. When leaders are assessed as inaccessible, insensitive, or unfamiliar with the daily experiences of teaching staff, confidence in their authority and in the organization is undermined.

Supervisor: *The supervisor refers to the person who directly supervises teaching (e.g., this could be a head or lead teacher, educational coordinator, site supervisor, director, or principal). The person may or may not teach in the classroom on a regular basis.*

Leader: *The leader refers to the person at a site who is responsible for overall daily operations in the workplace. This may be a different person from or the same person as the supervisor (e.g., this could be a director, principal, or site supervisor).*

What Teaching Staff Said

About Supervisors | Score: 4.33/6

The vast majority of staff members agreed that their supervisors are knowledgeable about early childhood education and supportive of teaching staff taking initiative.

- Nearly all teaching staff (**80 percent**) reported that their supervisors are knowledgeable about early childhood education and teaching young children, and **71 percent** agreed that their supervisors engage actively in professional learning.
- **70 percent** of teaching staff agreed that their supervisors encourage them to take initiative to solve problems.

Teaching staff assessments of supervisors' professional guidance and on-the-job support were less favorable.

- **53 percent** of teaching staff disagreed or only somewhat agreed that at least once a year, their supervisors meet with them to develop a personalized professional development plan.
- **52 percent** disagreed or only somewhat agreed that at least once a year, their supervisors review their job description to ensure it describes what they actually do.
- **40 percent** disagreed or only somewhat agreed that their supervisors are concerned about their personal welfare.
- Slightly more than one-third of teaching staff disagreed or only somewhat agreed that their supervisors know their teaching well (**35 percent**) and understand challenges they face in the classroom (**37 percent**).
- Slightly more than one-third of teaching staff agreed that once a month, their supervisors meet with them to discuss their teaching (**36 percent**) and to offer useful suggestions that help them improve their practice (**40 percent**).

Spotlight: Site Leadership

One-half of teaching staff disagree or only somewhat agree that their site leaders treat all staff fairly and consider teaching staff input about classroom and program policies.

About Leaders | Score: 4.22/6

Teaching staff mostly agreed that their site leaders know their site well and encourage staff to develop their skills, take initiative, and learn from each other.

- The majority of staff members reported that their site leaders know their centers, school, and site well (**78 percent**), and **70 percent** agree that their leaders encourage them to take initiative to solve problems.
- **68 percent** of teaching staff reported that their site leaders encourage all teaching staff to develop their skills, and **65 percent** agree that their site leaders encourage staff to learn from each other.

Teaching staff assessments of site leaders' role in professional guidance and on-the-job supports were less favorable.

- **60 percent** of teaching staff agreed that their site leaders are easy to talk to, and **59 percent** agreed that their site leaders are respectful of the role and expertise of teaching staff.
- Just **53 percent** of teaching staff agree that their leaders assist in the fair and timely resolution of teaching staff conflicts.

Fewer staff members felt that their site leaders had familiarity with how staff teach or understand the challenges they face in their classrooms.

- Nearly one-half of teaching staff disagreed or only somewhat agreed that their site leaders are familiar with how all staff members teach (**48 percent**) and/or understand the challenges teaching staff face in their classrooms (**51 percent**).
- **41 percent** agreed that their leaders are available to work in classrooms, if needed.

Leaders by Role^{xxiv}

In addition to understanding teacher perspectives on leadership, further analyses into the role of the site leaders were also carried out. Center-based early childhood programs represent a variety of staff leadership structures. In some centers, the leader works in the classroom and may even be considered a member of the teaching staff, while in others the leader does not typically participate in classrooms. To further probe the meaning of teaching staff assessments of supervisors and leaders, we examined how SEQUAL score varied by structure and function. We examined teaching staff assessments based on whether their supervisor or leader was another teacher or an administrator and whether they did or did not work in the classroom.

- In the sample, **25 percent** of teaching staff reported that their supervisor or leader was another teacher. Leaders who were also teachers were rated more highly by teaching staff than other leaders.
- **64 percent** of teaching staff reported that the program leader, regardless of their specific role/ job title, worked in the classroom for some period of time. Leaders who spend time in the classroom were rated more positively than those who did not.

Linking Teaching Staff Assessments to Quality Practice

- Teaching staff need strong educational leaders to whom they have easy access and from whom they can receive individualized feedback on job performance and reflective supervision. It is important for leaders and supervisors to gather information on staff through observation, feedback from other staff, and direct input from the staff members themselves.
- When teaching staff perceive that their leader or supervisor is not familiar with their classroom or teaching practice, it can limit the influence that those fulfilling leadership roles have on staff performance and undermine staff confidence in the program and its leadership. Spending time in classrooms is a necessary job responsibility of leaders and/or supervisors. Only through regular contact and observation can supervisors and site leaders truly understand what staff need to support children's learning.

SEQUAL and Observed Quality

For three-, four-, and five-star centers participating in the study, QUALITYstarsNY provided data on two forms of the Environmental Rating Scales: the Environmental Childhood Rating Scale (ECERS-R) and the Infant and Toddler Rating Scale (ITERS-Revised). The ECERS and ITERS are observational instruments designed to assess process quality focusing on interactions in the classroom, activities, and materials. The ECERS is applied to programs serving children age two to five, while the ITERS is used for programs serving children from birth to 30 months. See Appendix A. Study Design for additional detail on the scales.

Quality assessments by a trained independent observer using the Environmental Rating Scales were made available to our research team and analyzed in relation to teaching staff assessments of their work environments as captured by SEQUAL. Among the centers in the sample with an observed quality score, ECERS scores were provided for 67 centers and ITERS scores for 35 centers.

For centers with multiple ECERS or ITERS scores, scores were averaged across classrooms. Findings revealed relationships between teaching staff assessments by SEQUAL domains or dimensions and subscales of ITERS, in particular the interaction subscales. Centers rated by higher by teaching staff based on SEQUAL responses were significantly more likely to have higher scores on subscales of the ITERS.

Scores on the SEQUAL did not predict variation in ECERS ratings. The absence of findings may not reflect the lack of a relationship, but rather the restriction of ECERS scores in this sample.

Relationships Between SEQUAL and Measures of Observed Quality (ITERS)

Domain^{xxv}

- Centers with higher SEQUAL scores on the Teaching Supports domain had higher scores on the interaction subscale of the ITERS, which focuses on supervision of children and staff-child interactions.
- Centers with higher SEQUAL scores on the Learning Community domain also had higher scores on the interaction subscale of the ITERS.

Dimension

- Centers with higher scores on the Staffing and Teamwork dimensions had higher scores on the interaction subscale of the ITERS.

Final Thoughts and Recommendations

New York is one of a few states that has taken the critical first step in acknowledging the importance of work environment standards for teaching staff. Standards are necessary but insufficient if they are optional and if adequate resources and practices are not in place to ensure they are met.

The following are recommendations for funders and policymakers on how to continue New York's efforts to improve work environment conditions:

1. Institute strategies that engage early educators in the process of informing quality improvement and regularly collect data to assess how they experience the work environment.
2. Conduct an analysis of rated programs to determine to what degree programs across rating levels are meeting the Early Learning and Program Standards related to work environment conditions. Identify if there are correlations between overall ratings and specific standards.
3. Conduct focus groups with programs that have not met work environment standards to identify what supports would be needed to meet them.
4. Provide financial resources and other assistance specifically designed to enable programs and providers to comply with work environment standards in a reasonable period of time.
5. Expand and strengthen Early Learning and Development Program Standards related to the work environment. Use existing models, such as the International Labor Organization Policy Guidelines and the Model Work Standards for Centers and Homes to support this process.
6. Consider increasing the value or weight of work environment standards in the QUALITYstarsNY scoring system to emphasize their importance and ensure that programs cannot achieve the highest star ratings without addressing all work environment standards. Require that a certain percentage of work environment points must be earned to achieve the highest star levels and identify key standards that are mandatory at all star rating levels.

7. Develop and implement training programs that support programs leaders, supervisors, and coaches to address work environment issues. Program leaders, supervisors, and coaches all require support and training on how to implement and sustain these types of changes.
8. Provide funding to institutions of higher education and training programs to develop and offer classes and workshops related to work environment standards, rights of the teaching staff on the job, and the critical importance of economic, emotional, and physical well-being among adults in the workplace.



APPENDICES

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Appendix A: Study Design

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to data collection, the survey instrument and data collection procedures were approved by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of California, Berkeley.

In spring 2017, a notification letter was sent via email to all the center-based early care and education centers in New York participating in QUALITYstarsNY. The letter introduced the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) and announced the upcoming study, indicating that their center could be selected to participate. Within a week of the notification letter, staff at CSCCE sent an email to directors and teaching staff at centers selected for participation via Berkeley Qualtrics. This email indicated that their center was selected to participate, described the purpose of the survey, and provided the personalized link to access their survey. The data collection period began in spring 2017 and extended into fall 2017, with replacement sampling conducted as needed.

Before accessing the SEQUAL survey, the link first brought the participant to the Informed Consent page that detailed the purpose of the study, the procedures, any potential risks/discomforts, confidentiality of the data provided, contact information for our staff, a statement explaining that participation was completely voluntary, and finally, an online consent form where participants could agree or decline to participate. If the participant selected "agree," they were taken to the SEQUAL survey, and if they selected "disagree," they were redirected to the CSCCE homepage and removed from our SEQUAL mailing list.

The survey could be accessed from any electronic device connected to the Internet, and the personalized link allowed the participant to take the survey in more than one sitting. A research assistant called each director, confirmed both they and their teaching staff had received a link to the study, and offered to answer questions about the study. In addition to the outreach efforts of the assistant, a total of six reminder emails were sent to participants who had not completed the survey.

To thank participants for their time and participation, a gift card was sent to each participant who completed the survey.

Survey Instruments

Two survey instruments — the SEQUAL Teaching Staff Survey and the SEQUAL Administrative Survey — were employed to capture information on work environments. Also described below are the Environmental Ratings Scales, which are completed by QUALITYstarsNY on all participating programs with a three-star rating or higher. These assessments of observed quality were used by the CSCCE team to support the analysis of the SEQUAL findings.

Each survey was offered in English. The surveys were administered online by Berkeley Qualtrics and took approximately 40 minutes to complete.

SEQUAL Teaching Staff Survey. The SEQUAL Teaching Staff Survey includes two sections: 1) staff perceptions about workplace policies that affect their teaching practice; and 2) a profile of teacher education, experiences, and demographic information. For the section on staff perceptions of their work environment, teaching staff were asked to rate a series of statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The items focused on each of following five domains:

1. Teaching Supports – 33 items, including statements on the following dimensions: curriculum; observations and assessments; materials; support services for children and families; and staffing and professional responsibilities.
2. Learning Community – 12 items, including statements on professional development opportunities and applying learning;
3. Job Crafting – 21 items, including statements on the following dimension: making decisions in the workplace; teamwork; and input;
4. Adult Well-Being – 38 items, including statements on the following dimensions: economic well-being; quality of work life; and wellness supports; and
5. Leadership – 28 items, including perceptions of their supervisor and the leader of their program.

In the teaching staff profile, participants were asked to provide information on personal characteristics (e.g., gender, age, race/ethnicity), level of education, and work characteristics (e.g., wages, tenure, age range of children in their classroom).

SEQUAL Program Leader Survey. Program leaders also filled out a version of the survey. A program leader was identified as the person at the site who would have access to information about workplace benefits and policies, as well as program and staff characteristics. The program leader survey asked program leaders to provide a variety of information, including a center and administrator profile.

Center for Epidemiologic Studies Short Depression Scale CES-D 10. The short version of the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Short Depression Scale (CES-D 10), a widely used self-report measure for adolescents and adults designed to assess attitudes consistent with a diagnosis of depression was completed by administrators and teaching staff. The scale features 10 items that assess depressive symptoms as outlined by the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM). The items ask about mood, feelings, and physical health (e.g., appetite and sleep).^{xxvi}

Observed Quality. QUALITYstarsNY provided data on two forms of the Environmental Rating Scales: the Environmental Childhood Rating Scale (ECERS-R) and the Infant and Toddler Rating Scale (ITERS-Revised). ERS ratings were completed by an independent organization. The ECERS and ITERS are observational instruments designed to assess process quality focusing on interactions in the classroom, activities, and materials. ECERS is applied to programs serving children age two to five, while the ITERS is used for programs serving children from birth to 30 months.^{xxvii}

The ECERS features 43 items organized into seven subscales: Space and Furnishings; Personal Care Routines; Language-Reasoning; Activities; Interactions; Program Structure; and Parents and Staff.^{xxviii} The ITERS features 39 items organized into seven subscales: Space and Furnishings; Personal Care Routines; Listening and Talking; Activities; Interactions; Program Structure; and Parents and Staff. For both Environmental Ratings Scales, each item is scored by a trained assessor on a scale of 1 (inadequate) to 7 (excellent).^{xxix} All subscales, excluding that of Parents and Staff, were included in the analysis.

Sampling Frame and Selection

In line with our research questions, we pursued a sampling strategy that would allow comparison of work environment assessments from teaching staff employed at centers with different QRIS ratings that served infants and toddlers as well as older preschoolers and that were representative of different regions of the state. The sampling strategy focused on a stratified approach of selecting centers at each star level (one to five) and within each rating level, balancing by region of the state (centers in New York City and centers elsewhere in the state of New York) and centers serving infants and toddlers. Although our aim was to randomly select an equal number of centers at each star level, achieving this objective was not possible due to the low numbers of one-star and five-star centers in the population. To account for the low number of these centers, a greater number of three-star and four-star centers were selected. Only centers that had two or more classrooms and an active star rating received within the past year were included in the study.

Analysis Plan

Frequency Analyses. All SEQUAL items were rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). We used frequency analysis for SEQUAL items (e.g., the percent of teaching staff who agreed or disagreed), as a measure of teaching staff assessment of workplace policies, practices, and relationships. These frequencies are reported as percentages or fractions for each of the items on the SEQUAL domains and dimensions. Crosstabs were also performed to look at the percentage of teaching staff responses to the SEQUAL by region, center rating, and position.

T-Tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVAs). T-tests and ANOVAs were used to examine differences between groups (e.g., by star level, region). Depending on the number of groups, T-tests and ANOVAs were conducted to examine differences in teaching staff perceptions of their work environment as captured by their SEQUAL scores.

Correlations and Associations Between Scores. To examine the relationships between study variables and scores, bivariate correlations, chi-square, and regression models (linear and multiple regression) were conducted. Correlations were conducted for numerical variables and chi-square for categorical variables. Correlations, chi-square, and regression were used to examine the relationship between scores on specific SEQUAL dimensions and domains with the ECERS and ITERS subscales.

Throughout this report, we denote differences in SEQUAL scores and other variables by pointing out where scores between two or more groups are *significantly different* from one another. This indicates that there is a statistical difference between group scores or a statistical relationship between variables at a rate greater than chance levels. All significant findings are reported at a p value of $<.05$.

Population and Sample

At the time of the initial data collection, the population included the 315 centers participating in QUALITYstarsNY: 88 centers were located in New York City (e.g., Brooklyn, Bronx, Manhattan, Staten Island, and Queens), and 227 centers were located elsewhere in the state of New York. The population of staff employed at these centers included 315 directors and 4,473 teaching staff members.

Appendix B: Description of Program Leaders

Personal Characteristics

Race and Ethnicity

One-fifth (20 percent) of program leaders were identified as people of color. The breakdown of the sample by race/ethnicity was 80-percent white, 15-percent black/African American, 5-percent Hispanic/Latino, 4-percent multiracial, and 2-percent Asian.

Professional Characteristics

Education and Credentials

Almost all program leaders (90 percent) held a bachelor's degree or higher. Of those with a degree, around half (53 percent) majored in Early Childhood Education, 18 percent in Elementary Education, and 9 percent in Child Development or Psychology.

Experience and Tenure

Overall, program leaders had a wealth of experience in the field, with more than half (56 percent) working in the early care and education field for more than 20 years. There was variation in experience among program leaders in their current position at their center. While 32 percent of program leaders in the sample worked in their current role at their place of employment for more than 10 years, a sizable portion of program leaders were new to their role, with less than two years at their current position (28 percent). This finding, coupled with the fact that close to 20 percent of centers in the sample had a change in directors during the data collection for this study, suggests there is high turnover among center directors.

Program leaders working in five-star centers were much more likely to have been in their current position for more than 10 years (86 percent), compared to other less highly rated centers. It is worth noting that teaching staff working in five-star centers had overall higher SEQUAL scores, indicating more positive workplace supports and environments.

Compensation

Benefits

Health Care

Most program leaders in the sample (95 percent) had health insurance, with 68 percent receiving healthcare from their employer. This finding contrasts with the situation experienced by teaching staff, who were much less likely to receive insurance from their employer (see p. 19). Of the program leaders who have health insurance from another source, most purchased their own health insurance policy through New York State of Health (the Affordable Care Act/Health Care Marketplace) or were covered under the policy of a parent or spouse.

Appendix C: Tables and Figures

Population and Sample

Table C.1. Center Population and Sample^{xxx}

Star Rating	Overall in New York State	Sample
One-Star	35 centers	19 centers
Two-Star	75 centers	25 centers
Three-Star	57 centers	29 centers
Four-Star	136 centers	40 centers
Five-Star	12 centers	11 centers

Response Rates

Table C.2. Response Rate of Teaching Staff and Program Leaders, by Center

	Percent	Number of Centers
Centers with participation of BOTH program leader and teaching staff	51%	63
Centers with participation from teaching staff only	29%	36
Centers with participation from program leader only	9%	11
Centers with no participation from program leader and teaching staff	11%	14

Table C.3. Number of Program Leaders Sent Surveys and Response Rate, by Star Rating

Star Rating	Number of Centers Sent Surveys	Number of Centers That Completed Surveys	Percent by Star Level	Percent Overall
One-Star	19	7	37%	11%
Two-Star	21	12	57%	18%
Three-Star	33	19	58%	29%
Four-Star	40	20	50%	30%
Five-Star	11	8	73%	12%
Total	124	66		

Table C.4. Number of Teaching Staff Sent Surveys and Response Rate, by Star Rating

Star Rating	Total Number of Teachers Surveyed	Number of Teachers Who Completed the Survey	Percent by Star Level	Percent of Teaching Staff Overall (n=356)
One-Star	189	31	16%	9%
Two-Star	190	41	22%	12%
Three-Star	679	81	12%	22%
Four-Star	680	118	17%	33%
Five-Star	345	85	25%	24%
Total	2083	356		

Endnotes

1. Introduction

ⁱ Austin, L.J.E., Whitebook, M., Connors, M., & Darrah, R. (2011). *Staff preparation, reward, and support: Are quality rating and improvement systems addressing all of the key ingredients necessary for change?* Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from http://www.irle.berkeley.edu/cscce/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/CSCCEQRISPolicyBrief_2011.pdf.

ⁱⁱ Whitebook, M., McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., & Edwards, B. (2018). *Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2018*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <http://cscce.berkeley.edu/topic/early-childhood-workforce-index/2018/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care (2015, April). *QRIS Resource Guide: Section 4 Standards and Criteria*. Retrieved from https://qrisguide.acf.hhs.gov/files/chapters/QRISRG_Chapter_4_Standards.pdf; Zellman, G.L., & Perlman, M. (2008). *Child-Care Quality Rating and Improvement Systems in Five Pioneer States: Implementation Issues and Lessons Learned*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

^{iv} See BUILD Initiative & Teachstone (2016). What are the most common areas of quality assessed by QRIS? QRIS Compendium: Top Ten Questions about QRIS. Retrieved from <http://qriscompendium.org/top-ten/question-4/>; BUILD Initiative & Teachstone (2016). What are the features of professional development? QRIS Compendium: Top Ten Questions about QRIS. Retrieved from <http://qriscompendium.org/top-ten/question-10/>.

^v Helburn, S.W. (Ed.) (1995). *Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers. Technical Report*. Denver, CO: University of Colorado at Denver, Department of Economics, Center for Research in Economic and Social Policy;

Whitebook, M., Howes, C., & Phillips, D. (1990). *Who Cares? Child Care Teachers and the Quality of Care in America: Final Report of the National Child Care Staffing Study*. Washington, DC: Center for the Child Care Workforce; Whitebook, M., & Sakai, L. (2003). Turnover begets turnover: An examination of job and occupational instability among child care center staff. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 18(3), 271–395; Whitebook, M., & Sakai, L. (2004). *By a Thread: How Child Care Centers Hold on to Teachers, How Teachers Build Lasting Careers*. Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.17848/9781417524457>; Whitebook, M., Sakai, L., Gerber, E., & Howes, C. (2001). *Then and Now: Changes in Child Care Staffing, 1994–2000*. Washington, DC: Center for the Child Care Workforce; Whitebook, M., Sakai, L., & Howes, C. (1997). *NAEYC Accreditation as a Strategy for Improving Child Care Quality: An Assessment*. Washington, DC: Center for the Child Care Workforce.

^{vi} Whitebook et al. (2018).

^{vii} QUALITYstarsNY Standards. Retrieved from <http://qualitystarsny.org/foundations-standards.php>

^{viii} For reporting and analysis purposes, the category of “teacher” includes those who identified as teachers and head/lead teachers, based on the similarity of job duties and roles.

^{ix} Whitebook, et al. (2018).

2. Teacher Characteristics

^x Whitebook et al. (2018).

^{xi} Whitebook, M., McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., & Edwards, B. (2018). *Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2018, State Profiles: New York*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <http://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2018/06/2018-Index-New-York.pdf>.

^{xii} Federal Earned Income Tax Credit, Medicaid (for themselves), Healthy Families or Medical/ Medicaid for Children, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, also known as “food stamps”).

3. Findings

^{xiii} $F(3,352)=3.68, p=.01$

^{xiv} $F(3,353)=3.41, p=.02$

^{xv} $t(351)= -2.81, p=.00$

^{xvi} $F(3,352)=3.68, p=.01$

^{xvii} $F(3,353)=8.69, p=.00$

^{xviii} $F(2,341)=3.52, p=.03$

^{xix} $F(3,348)=4.05, p=.01$

^{xx} $t(321)= 5.56, p=.00$

^{xxi} $F(2,343)=3.08, p=.05$

^{xxii} $t(353)= -2.22, p=.03$

^{xxiii} $F(2,323)=7.27, p=.00$

^{xxiv} No comparisons within the Program Leadership domain were examined by site or teacher characteristics.

^{xxv} Teaching Supports ($p=.05$), Learning Community ($p=.01$), Staffing ($p=.03$), and Teamwork ($p=.04$).

Appendix A

^{xxvi} Andresen, E.M., Malmgren, J.A., Carter, W.B., & Patrick, D.L. (1994). Screening for depression in well older adults: Evaluation of a short form of the CES-D. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 10, 77–84.

^{xxvii} Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. (2018). *Environmental Rating Scales: Assessment Instruments for Early Childhood for Early Childhood and Program Child Care Program Quality*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved from <https://ers.fpg.unc.edu/>.

^{xxviii} Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. (2018). *Environmental Rating Scales: Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-R)*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved from <https://ers.fpg.unc.edu/>.

^{xxix} Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. (2018). *Environmental Rating Scales: Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-R)*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved from <https://ers.fpg.unc.edu/>.

^{xxx} Four-star centers were oversampled to account for the low number of five-star centers in the population. Additionally, one-star and two-star centers were combined for analysis at the program level to account for the low response rate.