

TO: CAEL QIS Advisory Committee
FROM: (CDE)
RE: Revised Interim Report

The American Institutes for Research (AIR), a partner in the California Comprehensive Center (CA CC) at WestEd, has revised this interim report in collaboration with the CA CC.

The revised draft reflects input from the California Early Learning Quality Improvement System (CAEL QIS) Advisory Committee at its October 29, 2009, meeting as well as from the Steering Committee on November 2, 2009. The revised draft also incorporates feedback from CDE staff, expert consultants, and stakeholders across California.

The Steering Committee will discuss the draft on November 23 at a meeting that begins at 3 p.m. This second draft will be reviewed at the December 2 CAEL QIS Advisory Committee meeting, and final changes will be incorporated prior to the submission of the CAEL QIS Interim Report to the Governor and Legislature as required in statute (Senate Bill 1629-2008).

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INTERIM REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of the California Early Learning Quality Improvement System (CAEL QIS) Advisory Committee is to develop a plan to improve outcomes for children and narrow the school readiness gap by improving the quality of early learning and care programs for children from birth to five years old.

A broad partnership created the legislation (Senate Bill [SB] 1629 Steinberg-Chapter 307, Statutes of 2008) that established the 13-member Committee and called for the creation of the CAEL QIS. Funding is provided through the leadership of the First 5 Children and Families Commission and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. As envisioned by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell's P-16 Council in 2007, any effort to close the achievement gap must begin with high-quality preschool and other early learning programs.

This interim report describes the Committee's progress in assessing the existing early learning and care infrastructure and in designing the new system. By December 31, 2010, the Advisory Committee will finalize its recommendations for the creation of the Early Learning Quality Improvement System.

Background

Legislative Charge

In September 2008, Governor Schwarzenegger signed SB 1629. Specifically, the Committee was asked to report to the Legislature and the Governor on the following four elements of a quality improvement system:

1. An assessment and analysis of the existing early care and education infrastructure, including other state and local early learning quality improvement systems
2. The development of an early learning quality rating scale for child development programs, including preschool as well as programs for infants and toddler
3. The development of a funding model aligned with the quality rating scale for child care and development programs
4. Recommendations on how local, state, federal, and private resources can best be utilized to complement a statewide funding model as part of a comprehensive effort to improve the state's child care and development system

Goals and Process

The first meeting of the CAEL QIS Advisory Committee was held on March 23, 2009, with additional meetings held on June 10, August 26, October 29, and December 2. The Committee's goal is to make policy recommendations and an implementation plan for an early learning quality rating structure and system supports to increase the quality of early learning programs in California.

The CAEL QIS will build on the extensive research on the impact of high quality early learning programs on children's readiness for school and life. Early experiences from birth to age five shape whether a child's brain develops a strong foundation for successful learning, health and behavior. Early identification and treatment of special needs can minimize disabilities; early intervention programs for high-risk infants and toddlers have been shown to have long-lasting

benefits; and disadvantaged children who attend high-quality preschool programs are more likely to be in the right grade for the right age, perform well on standardized tests, and graduate from high school. As a result, every dollar invested in high-quality preschool programs provides a \$7 to \$16 return on investment by saving on expenditures for compensatory education, the criminal justice system, and public assistance.

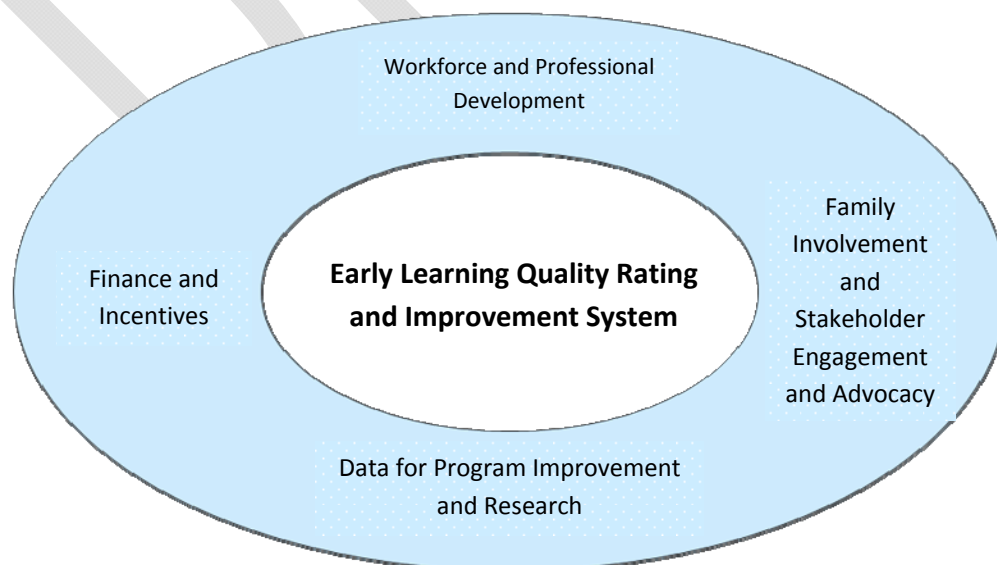
The majority of the work in the first year has focused on SB 1629 Tasks 1 and 2 --assessing the current status of early learning and care programs in California, examining quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) models in counties and other states, and framing the initial elements of the quality rating structure and system for California. Some work has also begun on Task 3 to prepare for the development of a funding model aligned with the QRIS.

The second year will focus on more specific recommendations for the implementation of an early learning quality improvement system for California, including which programs will be invited to participate, the funding model, and recommendations for how various resources can best complement the statewide funding model to improve the early learning and care system. For a more complete description of the Committee process, see Appendix A.

Model for Early Learning Quality Improvement System in California

The CAEL QIS Advisory Committee began by defining a model to frame its deliberations on the development of an early learning quality improvement system. Central to the model is the development of an early learning quality rating scale or structure to assess the quality of programs; produce summary ratings; and publish results to inform families, providers, and policymakers.

While the rating structure is a key part of an improvement system, the broader system must also be accompanied by technical assistance and financial resources to support improvements in program quality. As shown in the model below, the Advisory Committee identified four major mechanisms to support program improvements in early care and learning programs: (1) workforce and professional development; (2) family involvement and stakeholder engagement and advocacy; (3) data for program improvement and research; and (4) finance and incentives.



Assessment and Analysis of Existing Early Care and Education Infrastructure in California

Any careful redesign of a system begins with an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. To address this task, the Advisory Committee conducted a thorough assessment of the existing status of the early learning and care infrastructure in California, as well as lessons that can be learned from local QRIS models in California and from systems in other states.

Challenges and Strengths

The Committee has identified the following challenges facing the state's early childhood education (ECE) or early learning infrastructure:

Access

- High-quality preschool programs can improve school readiness and raise achievement, especially for disadvantaged students. However, while preschool attendance is the norm in California, unfortunately high-quality programs are not.¹
- More than \$4 billion is currently spent on an array of state- and federally administered early learning and care services in the state, but there are insufficient funds to serve all the eligible children.²

Quality

- Current reimbursement rates for state-funded programs provide little financial incentive to improve quality. In 22 counties, the market rate ceilings for vouchers for center-based programs that only have to meet minimal licensure standards is higher than the Standard Reimbursement Rate for state-contracted programs such as State Preschool and General Child Care that must meet the more stringent Title 5 standards.
- Staff educational requirements in early learning and care programs range widely from basic health and safety courses to higher degrees in ECE. Compensation for those with a Bachelor's (BA) degree is low, and turnover is high compared to that of better compensated K-12 teachers.
- Major challenges to workforce development include problems with transfer of credits, inability to serve the number of students who want to enroll, outdated course content, few opportunities for supervised fieldwork, insufficient classes at hours and locations accessible to non-traditional students, and lack of a mechanism to track whether the people trained with public dollars stay in the field.
- Access to Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards (CARES), a program that rewards early learning teachers and family child care providers for educational attainment and professional development, has declined from 44 counties in 2008-09 to 18 in 2009-10. While a more targeted program (Child Care Salary and Retention Program/AB 212) for employees of state-contracted programs still exists in 55

¹ Karoly, Ghosh-Dastidar, Zellman, Perlman, & Fernyhough, *Prepared to Learn: The Nature and Quality of Early Care and Education for Preschool-Age Children in California*, RAND, 2008.

² Presentation by Camille Maben, California Department of Education, at March 23, 2009, CAEL QIS Committee meeting.

counties, the reduced access to CARES has had a significant impact on the professional development landscape.

Infrastructure

- Licensing standards have not been updated in many years to reflect effective practice and research. Title 22 licensing standards for staff-child ratios and educational requirements are relatively lenient compared to nationally recommended standards. Even the more stringent Title 5 standards for state-contracted programs are not strong in some key areas, such as teacher education qualifications.
- California currently ranks low compared to other states in its licensing inspection rate; only one in five programs is required to be inspected annually. Although 60 percent of programs receive some type of licensing visit, such as to investigate a complaint, the inability to conduct annual or random inspections is a concern. As a result of budget reductions, licensing analysts in California have caseloads twice the national average.
- Efforts to track the effectiveness of dollars spent on early learning and care in California are hampered by the lack of a unique student identifier for participants in ECE programs or for staff participating in professional development. While the various agencies administering early learning programs collect a lot of data, for the most part, the data elements collected do not match, and therefore they cannot be used effectively to inform policy development, resource allocation, and research and evaluation.

The Advisory Committee also identified a number of quality improvement initiatives that a state must have in place to qualify for new federal grants that might help finance improvements in the state's early learning and care system. These essential elements include:

- Foundations and curriculum framework
- Child development assessment
- Professional development system projects
- A unified data system
- Collaborative efforts
- Outreach to underrepresented populations

California, however, has a number of strong efforts already underway. These include but are not limited to the following examples:

Foundations and Curriculum Framework

- California's *Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations* provide a comprehensive understanding of young children's learning and development during the first three years of life, and the *California Preschool Learning Foundations* describe what preschool children know before entering kindergarten.
- Together, the *Foundations* inform curriculum frameworks, to be released in 2010, that provide strategies and background for early childhood program curricula and for educating staff in the field of early learning and care.

Child Development Assessment

- California's Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)-R and DRDP-Access represent another key component of the state's efforts to improve the quality of ECE programs by focusing on child outcomes, and it is being aligned with the *Foundations*.

Professional Development

- The California Department of Education (CDE) is partnering with First 5 California to develop Early Childhood Educator competencies to describe core knowledge, skills, and dispositions for early childhood educators working with children birth to age five.
- Eighty-five of 103 community colleges are working to align eight core ECE courses and to work with California State Universities on how they can meet the needs of the profession.
- The Baccalaureate Pathways in Early Childhood Education (BPECE) is building a system of common classes to help students achieve their BA degrees.
- Innovative "cohort" BA degree completion programs, which target small groups of adults working in ECE to pursue a course of study together, at convenient times and locations, have been established in conjunction with CARES in six counties.
- Additional CDE investments in professional development include, but are not limited to:
 - The Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) is a nationally recognized model for improving the quality of care for children birth to age three through its PITC Institutes and Regional Partners for Quality.
 - The California Preschool Instructional Network (CPIN) provides networking opportunities for preschool administrators and training on the preschool foundations and English Learner Guide.
 - The Child Development Training Consortium located at community colleges provides assistance to students for tuition costs, permit fees, and professional growth advisors as they progress through a professional pathway.
 - The California Early Childhood Mentor Program, also located at community colleges, supports retention of experienced ECE professionals to serve as mentors to students becoming new teachers and directors.
 - Training CalWORKs Recipients as Child Development Teachers helps current and former CalWORKs students in obtaining their Associate Teacher and Teacher Permits.
 - Through the Child Care Initiative Project, Child Care Resource and Referral agencies provide pre-service and in-service training as well as technical assistance to family child care home providers in multiple languages in every county; and the Exempt Care Training Project offers training to exempt-care providers.
 - For more information, see the Child Care and Development Fund Plan for California, Part V. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/stateplan2010-11.doc>.

Unified Data System

- California is in the midst of implementing the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS), a longitudinal K-12 education data system that will include unique student identifiers (SSIDs). SSIDs are required for young children in special education programs.
- California is also designing the California Longitudinal Teacher Integrated Data Education System (CALTIDES), with rollout scheduled for 2011-12. The Commission

on Teacher Credentialing has already assigned Statewide Educator Identifiers for nearly all educators currently employed in K-12 schools, and there may be potential for incorporating early learning and care personnel.

- California's Child Care Resource and Referral agencies track the availability of center- and home-based early learning and care by age group, county, and zip code. The California Child Care Resource and Referral Network produces a biannual statewide profile of supply and demand for early learning and care.
- Local Child Care Planning Councils annually identify the zip codes in each county with the greatest unmet need for additional State Preschool and General Child Care programs. The data are used to guide the release of any new funds for these state-contracted programs.

Collaborative Efforts

- The CDE is working to leverage state with federal investments in early childhood programs, forging a particularly strong partnership between the State Preschool Program and Head Start.

Outreach to Underrepresented Populations

- With its recent consolidation of programs for preschool-age children meeting state Title 5 standards, California has the largest State Preschool Program in the nation. This includes the Prekindergarten Family Literacy Program, enacted in 2006, which has a focus on promoting family involvement in children's language development, a recognized key element in school readiness.
- First 5 California Power of Preschool (PoP) demonstration programs were established in nine counties in neighborhoods with a high proportion of children who are in poverty, English learners, and in low-performing school neighborhoods. First 5 also initiated School Readiness and Special Needs Projects to expand access to early learning and care for the most vulnerable children.
- Child Care Resource and Referral agencies counsel more than 200,000 families per year on child care choices and types of settings available, and 59 of the 61 agencies also administer Alternative Payment Program child care subsidies to low-income families.

Local Early Learning Quality Improvement System Models in California

A number of models for quality improvement systems have already been implemented at the county level in California. PoP projects, while currently focused on the preschool age group, illustrate many of the elements of a broader quality rating and improvement system, such as (1) standards for the learning environment, family involvement, developmental screening, care of children with special needs, licensing status/compliance, staff-child ratios and group size, and teacher/staff educational requirements; (2) external assessments of environmental quality; (3) several tiers or levels; (4) provisions for entry from multiple settings (e.g., school-based, center-based, Head Start, family child care); and (5) tiered reimbursement. For a description of these programs and other initiatives, see Appendix B.

QRIS in Other States

With assistance from national experts, the Committee examined the features of early learning quality rating systems that currently exist in 19 other states. All state QRISs have several

common elements: standards, accountability measures, program and practitioner outreach and support, financing incentives, and parent/consumer education. The Committee heard testimony on some valuable lessons from other states:

- Conduct a pilot and have the training for the rating infrastructure in place before implementing the quality rating statewide.
- Set clear standards from the outset for the rating system.
- Use environment rating scales (ERS) as a core element of quality rating and improvement systems, but they can be expensive to administer.
- Determine who should conduct the quality ratings, recognizing that this is a key decision.
- Accompany ratings with financial incentives and technical assistance, given that participation in most QRIS systems is voluntary, and that providers are taking some risk to be rated.

For a description of QRIS in other states and of the challenges they have faced, see Appendix C.

Progress toward Design of a California Early Learning Quality Rating Scale/Structure and Improvement System

The CAEL QIS Advisory Committee is currently immersed in the process of designing the new early learning quality rating and improvement system. The following summarizes the status of the Committee's deliberations and directions on key elements in the new QRIS to date.

QRIS Structure

The QRIS must take into account that early learning and care takes place in a very different context than K-12 education. Rather than a public school system administered by local educational agencies, licensed early learning and care is operated by more than 54,000 publicly and privately supported providers in school-, community-, faith-, and home-based settings, with additional services provided in many license-exempt settings. The QRIS's role will be to provide incentives and technical assistance across this mixed delivery system to improve quality.

Elements of Rating Structure

The following section summarizes the status of the full Committee's deliberations on four key elements of the Quality Rating Structure—family involvement, ratios and group size, environment rating scales, and staff education and training—and some subcommittee work on data for program improvement. To guide its work, the Committee is seeking more information on the distribution of programs across tiers in the states that already have quality rating systems. What percentage of early learning and care programs should California expect to be in the top tier when the quality rating system is first implemented? How would financial incentives and technical assistance be expected to affect the distribution of programs across tiers over time?

Family Involvement

Issues: The Committee has identified two key tasks related to family involvement—to develop a communication plan to ensure broad input into the QRIS design, and to develop a plan for family involvement in early learning and care programs with a rating structure to measure the level of involvement.

Direction: The Committee approved the development of up to five tiers for family involvement in the rating structure, with a menu of effective strategies that are appropriate to different program settings and California's cultural and language groups.

The Committee has also approved factors for the successful inclusion of family involvement in the QRIS. For more detail on the full Committee and Subcommittee work on family involvement, see Appendix D.

Ratios and Group Size

Issues: California currently has two standards for center staff to child ratios: Title 22 standards for licensure, and stricter Title 5 standards for programs under state contract to provide State Preschool or General Child Care. State reimbursement ceilings for voucher programs that are only required to meet the Title 22 regulations are, in many instances, higher than those for contracted programs required to meet Title 5 standards. California has no group size standards.

To reward programs for better practices, the Design Subcommittee presented a possible design option whereby Title 22 adult: child ratio standards would become Tier 1 with annual visits and opportunity to revise licensing standards; Title 5 standards would become Tier 3; and the same levels would be maintained for Tiers 1-2 and for Tiers 3-4. Tier 5 would include more protective ratios for infants and toddlers to incorporate PITC standards and the less stringent National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)-recommended ratio of 10:1 for preschool age children, with the change reflecting increased professional development requirements in Tier 5.

Some Committee members expressed concern that any change in the required ratios or group size requirements could have cost implications, reducing access to early learning and care. Others said that the fiscal impact of requiring more protective ratios or group size limitations must be weighed against the cost to children of postponing quality improvements, and that the purpose of a QRIS is to offer incentives for programs to enhance quality to benefit children.

Direction: The Committee directed the Design Subcommittee to continue to refine all five tiers in relation to research, effective practices, and costs including facility costs; and to build on existing research, systems, and strengths found in Title 22, Title 5, NAEYC, PITC, and others. For more detail on the Committee and Subcommittee work on staff-child ratios and group size, see Appendix D.

Environment Rating Scale

Issues: The Committee heard strong support from the Design Subcommittee for including one or more environment rating scales as a core component in the QRIS. However, discussion continues regarding: which ERSs to use and in which combination. In particular, members want to ensure that the higher tiers include an adequate measure of teacher-child interaction, one of the factors most strongly related to improved child outcomes. Other issues include when to require third-party assessments as opposed to self-assessments.

Direction: The Committee directed the Design Subcommittee to continue to develop two options. Both options would use licensing for tier 1 and self-assessments based on ERS in tier 1. Option 1 would require third-party assessments using environment rating scales, such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS), and the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS), in tiers 3-5.

Option 2 would add assessments focused on teacher-child interaction in tiers 3-5. To guide its recommendations, the Committee has requested additional information comparing and contrasting the various environmental rating scales, such as ECERS, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), the PITC Program Assessment Rating Scale (PARS), and others.

For more detail on the Committee and Subcommittee work on environment rating scales, Appendix D.

Staff Education and Training

Issues: One set of challenges facing the Committee is to define the “workforce” and to determine the educational qualifications for various staff positions necessary to improve school readiness outcomes for children. Another involves providing many gateways to education and workforce development, with accountability for public investments in such education tracked through data in a registry.

Direction: The Committee has directed the Workforce and Professional Development and Quality Incentives Committee to continue work on proposed tiers for Early Educator Professional Development with consideration of early educator competencies and California’s career ladder, including the delivery system for professional development. The Committee has also requested information on what the community colleges and California State Universities need to expedite the articulation and transfer process to improve degree completion. For more detail on the Committee and Subcommittee discussions regarding workforce development, see Appendix D.

Data for Program Improvement

Issues: Among the key challenges related to developing data systems for program improvement, two issues rise to the forefront:

- How to standardize data elements collected across at least a dozen different early learning and care programs
- How to develop a unique child identifier that works for both school- and community-based programs

Data systems are integral to the state’s chances of obtaining a federal Early Learning Challenge or “Race to the Top” grant.

Direction: The Data Systems for Program Improvement Subcommittee identified key principles of an early learning data system: (1) confidential; (2) useable/practical; (3) accessible and interoperable; (4) transparent; (5) includes and connects child, family, teacher/provider, and program data; (6) provider-friendly; (7) easily adaptable and can grow and change over time; and (8) dynamic.

The subcommittee is also focusing on how to provide a unique student identifier for children in early learning and care programs, and whether to limit the requirement to publicly contracted programs or to the much broader array of publicly funded voucher and private programs.

For a Matrix of Current Early Childhood Education Data prepared by the CDE and more detail on the Committee and Subcommittee work on data systems for program improvement, see Appendix E.

Initial Work to Develop a Financial Model

Multiple finance issues are involved in establishing a QRIS. The legislatively assigned tasks of developing a funding model aligned with the QRIS and recommending how resources can best be utilized to complement that model cannot be fully addressed until the design recommendations are completed. At the same time, recognizing that design recommendations must take into account cost considerations, the Finance and Incentives subcommittee identified a list of key questions and is collecting and analyzing related information. In addition, the CDE has prepared a matrix of existing state and federal resources for early learning and care. For details on the Committee and Subcommittee work related to the development of the financial model, see Appendix F.

Next Steps

The next steps related to the development of the CAEL QIS are to complete the recommendations for the design of the Quality Rating Scale (Structure) and the program support mechanisms for the Quality Improvement System. In particular, more attention will be focused on quality elements supporting our children's language and cultural diversity and on serving infants and toddlers and children with special needs. The goal will be to create a strategic framework that builds on the strengths of California's existing early learning and care infrastructure, is informed by evidence-based practices, and makes the best use of existing as well as new resources. For a timeline for the Advisory Committee's work, see Appendix G.

At the same time, the Advisory Committee recognizes the need to move quickly to maximize the receipt of any new federal resources for early learning programs and to take advantage of other opportunities to leverage limited state resources. On November 9, 2009, Governor Schwarzenegger announced an Executive Order appointing the CAEL QIS Committee to be a part of the state's new Early Learning Advisory Council. As a result, the Committee may be called upon to assist with the preparation of an application for an Early Learning Challenge Grant. As such, the Committee's Work Plan may change based on other factors, including this grant and additional funding opportunities.

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Committee Process

Appendix B: Local Early Quality Improvement Models in California

Appendix C: QRIS in Other States: Description and Challenges

Appendix D: Design Options for California's QRS: First 4 Elements

Appendix E: Options for Data System Improvement

Appendix F: Preliminary Work on Financial Model

Appendix G: Timeline for CAEL QIS Committee Work, 2010

APPENDICES

DRAFT

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This California Early Learning Quality Improvement System (CAEL QIS) Advisory Committee’s Interim Report reflects the work of committee members; administrators of early learning and care programs; child care licensing officials; county superintendents of education; child care resource and referral and local child care planning council leaders, representatives from higher education; and nationally known experts and content specialists who shared their knowledge about successful quality rating and improvements systems and relevant research. The report also reflects the input of presenters and participants in the five full Committee meetings and monthly meetings of the five subcommittees.

CAEL QIS Advisory Committee Members

The California Early Learning Quality Improvement System Advisory Committee is a broadly based, diverse group with the following 13 members appointed in accordance with statute:

Language from Senate Bill 1629, Chapter 307	Committee Members
(1) The Superintendent of Public Instruction or his or her designee	1. Gavin Payne , Chief Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction
(2) The Secretary of Education or his or her designee	2. Glen Thomas , Secretary of Education
(3) The President pro Tempore of the Senate or his or her designee	3. Dave Gordon , Superintendent, Sacramento County Office of Education
(4) The Speaker of the Assembly or his or her designee	4. Joan Buchanan , Assembly Member
(5) The Director of the Department of Finance or his or her designee	5. Jeannie Oropeza , Program Budget Manager, Department of Finance
(6) The Director of the Department of Social Services or his or her designee	6. Venus Garth, Branch Chief , Department of Social Services
(7) The Governor shall appoint two representatives	7. Dennis Vicars , Chief Executive Officer, Human Services Management Corporation/PACE 8. Celia Ayala , Chief Operating Officer, Los Angeles Universal Preschool
(8) The Chairperson of the California Children and Families Commission or his or her designee	9. Kris Perry , Executive Director, First 5 California
(9) The Senate Committee on Rules shall appoint two representatives from the early care and education community, one who is a program administrator of a child development program funded by the department,	10. Cliff Marcussen , Executive Director, Options, and Head Start-State Preschool Program 11. Consuelo Espinoza , Infant/Toddler Specialist, WestEd

and another who is a caregiver for infants and toddlers

(10) The Speaker of the Assembly shall appoint two representatives, one from the early care and education community who has experience with English learners, and one who is a local educational agency teacher who teaches kindergarten

12. **Yolie Flores Aguilar**, Board Member, Los Angeles Unified School District

13. **Toby Boyd**, Kindergarten Teacher, Elk Grove Unified School District

CAEL QIS Subcommittee Chairs and Vice-Chairs

- Design ideas for Licensing, Quality Rating, and Improvement Systems
 - Dennis Vicars, Chair, and Consuelo Espinosa, Vice-Chair
- Workforce and Professional Development and Quality Incentives
 - Dave Gordon, Chair, and Glen Thomas, Vice-Chair
- Parent Involvement and Stakeholder Engagement and Advocacy
 - Celia Ayala, Chair, and Yolie Flores Aguilar, Vice-Chair
- Finance and Incentives, Including Funding Model Aligned with Quality Rating Scale
 - Cliff Marcussen, Chair, and Jeannie Oropeza, Vice-Chair
- Data Systems for Program Improvement and Evaluation/Research
 - Glen Thomas, Chair, and Toby Boyd, Vice-Chair

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