



## Congratulations!!!

You can be proud to know that your child's early learning program is participating in the Virginia Star Quality Initiative, a quality rating and improvement system that assesses, communicates, and supports quality in early childhood settings. Your child's early learning program's preschool and toddler classrooms have received a **three-star rating**.

For many early childhood programs, certain standards and expectations are required by their regulating authority, such as the Department of Social Services, Board of Education or Head Start Performance Standards. Compliance with these standards and requirements gives you the assurance that programs are delivering an adequate level of services. Participation in the Star Quality Initiative and the award of a one-star or higher rating reflects this program's choice to raise the bar in commitment to quality beyond expectation or requirement.

Participation in the Star Quality Initiative – no matter what star level awarded – 1) signals a commitment to continuing quality improvement, and 2) distinguishes programs for going above standards required of them.

Programs are rated based on standards which were developed using the principle that quality early learning programs are the foundation for children's success. Therefore, the QRIS standards reflect research-based practices to improve outcomes for children. The standards are organized into four categories, and there are five star levels which build upon each other in order to support continuous quality improvement.

The four categories are: 1) the **education, qualifications, and training** of program administrators, teachers, and assistant teachers; 2) the quality of the **interactions** between adults and children in the classroom; 3) the **structure** of the program, including the ratio of children to staff in each classroom; and 4) the classroom **environment and instruction** practices demonstrated by teachers.

### A program that receives a star rating:

- ★ is on a quality improvement path and is committed to continued quality improvement;
- ★ distinguishes itself for exceeding standards and expectations required of it;
- ★ assures you of its focus on producing a high quality experience for your child;
- ★ reflects a culture of commitment to excellence among administrators, staff and families; and
- ★ has a distinctive vision and articulated plan for achieving quality benchmarks.

A Star Quality rating of **three stars** means that your child is enrolled in an early learning program whose level of quality surpasses standards set by regulatory authorities. Features typical of three star programs include:

- ★ a majority of administrators and teachers with at least an Associate degree specific to enhancing the development of young children and facilitating their learning;
- ★ a staff training program for administrators and teachers that includes supplementary training workshops and other professional and leadership opportunities, showing that they are dedicated to expanding their knowledge and skills;
- ★ classrooms where positive relationships, engaging activities, positive behavior management, and concept development are sometimes, but not consistently, fostered;
- ★ classrooms with teachers trained in First Aid and CPR and staff to child ratios that are lower than basic requirements, meaning that teachers have more time to support your child's individual learning and that the program is focused on best practices regarding health and safety; and
- ★ a philosophy that values parent communication, supporting children with individual health, educational, or behavioral needs, and encouraging smooth transitions from home to child care to kindergarten.