

# Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Programs

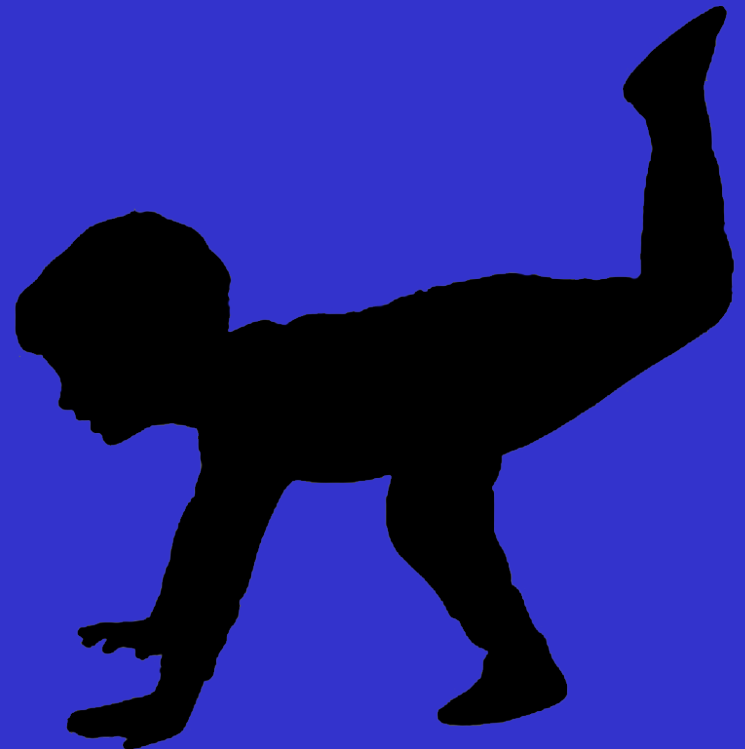


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*Context:*

Increasing numbers of children are attending Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Programs.

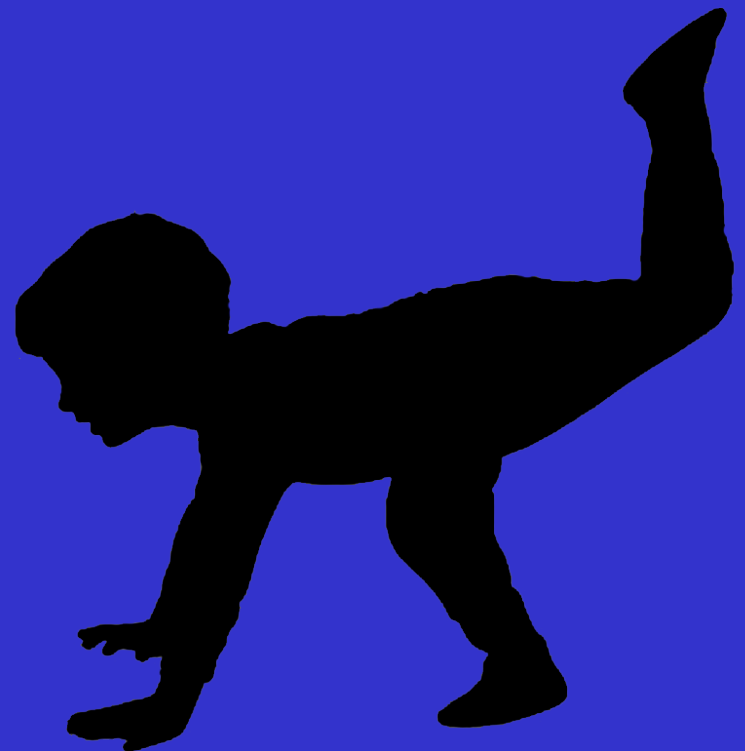
Public spending on ECEC programs is increasing.



*Context:*

Good Early Childhood Education programs are good for children and families. \*\*

\*\* Most research in this area is based on samples of children from deprived backgrounds.



## *Context: What is quality?*

### Good ECEC programs:

- Provide warm and nurturing environments
- Provide activities and materials that children can interact with and that have been selected by staff to further specific educational goals
- Provide children with useful and supportive feedback about their own performance
- Meet the needs of children from diverse backgrounds who have different learning needs



But how do we know if our programs  
are good?



# But how do we know if our programs are good?

- We can't rely on parents because lots of research shows that parents are not good at identifying program quality
- We need external ratings of quality in monitoring quality



## *Monitoring Quality: Why?*

- Quality Improvement
- Public Education
- Accountability



## *Monitoring Quality: Why?*

Rating systems are used as part of accountability systems to drive improvement



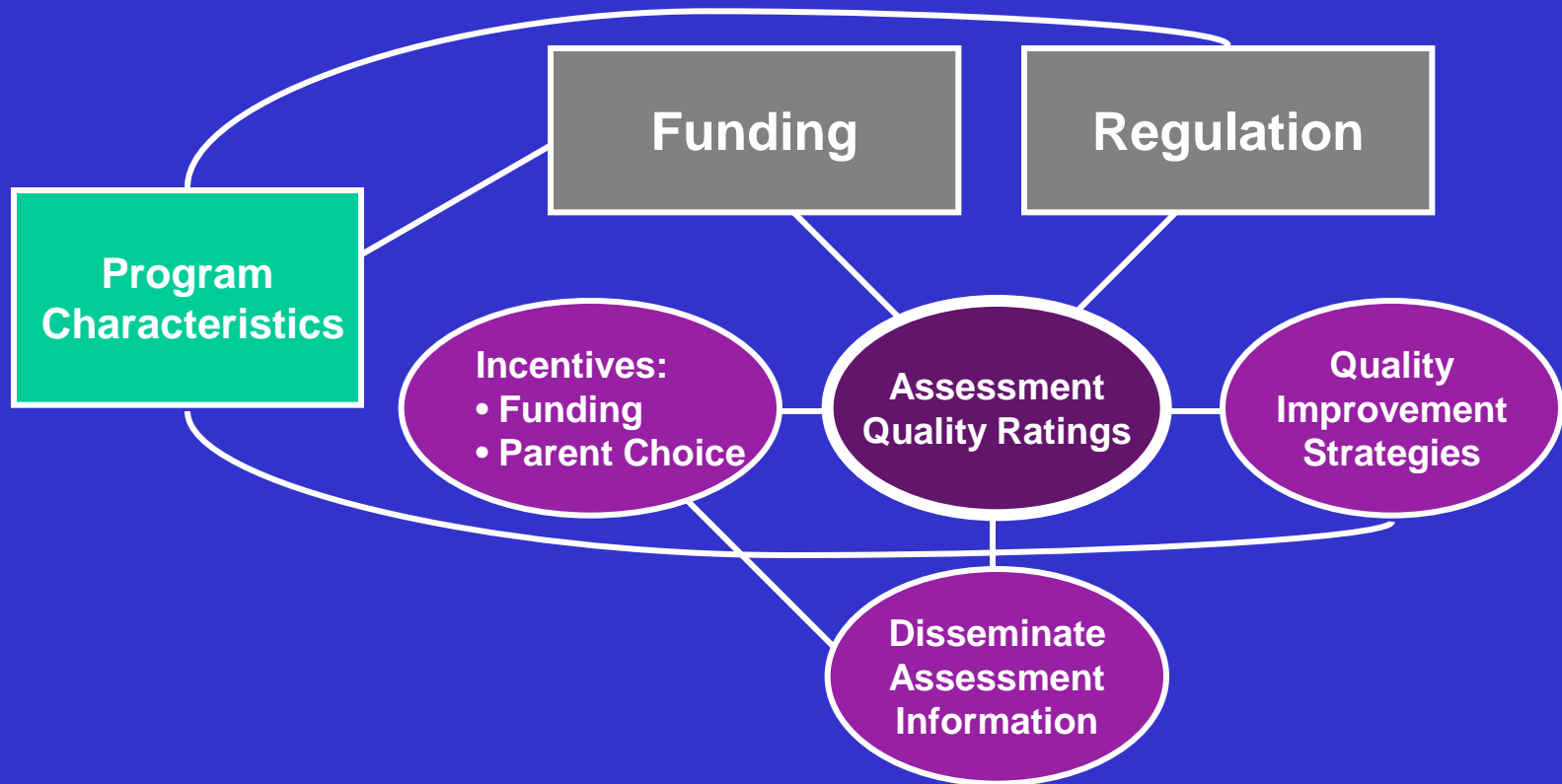
common restaurant  
rating system

Test scores have consequences associated with them.



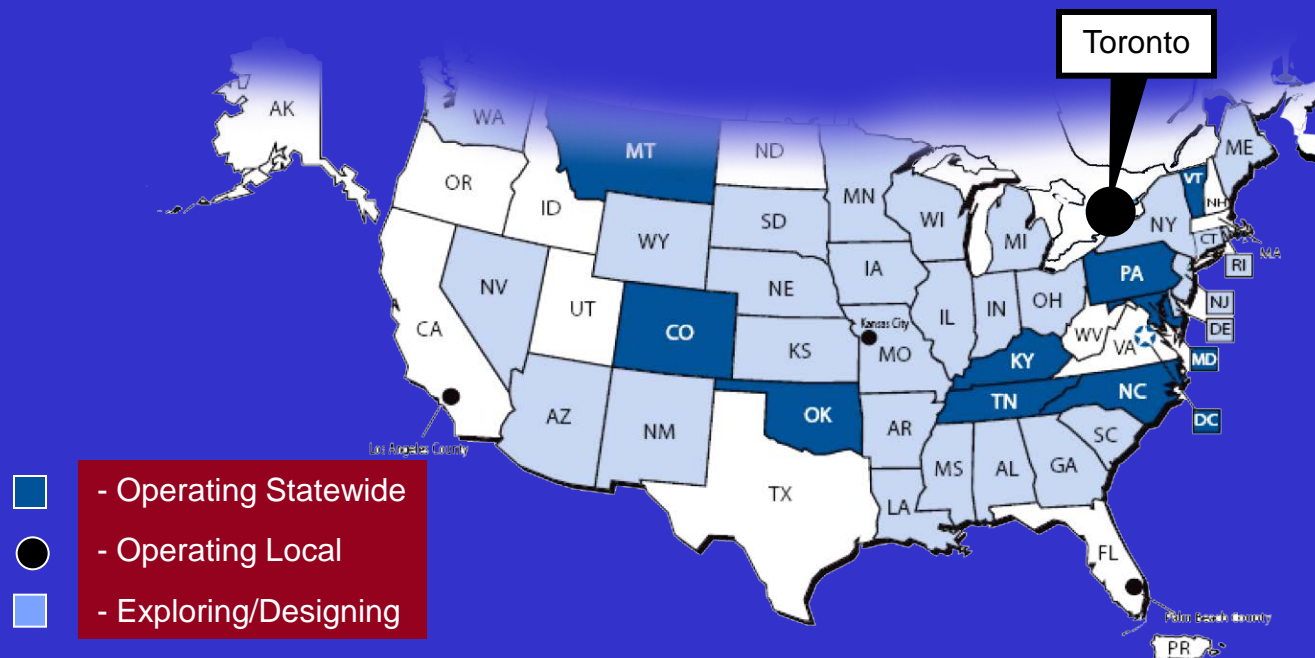
## *Monitoring Quality: Why?*

Quality improvement, accountability, public education



# *Monitoring Quality: Why?*

Many states are using QRIS's in centres, preschools and pre-kindergarten programs



Source: NCCIC (2004), UWA (2005)

*Monitoring Quality: How?*

*Quality measures must be:*

- Fair



## *Monitoring Quality: How?*

*Quality measures must be:*

- Fair.
  - Valid  
*(The measure actually tests what it's supposed to measure)*



## *Monitoring Quality: How?*

*Quality measures must be:*

- Fair.
  - Valid
  - Reliable

*(The measure must be applied objectively)*



# *Monitoring Quality: How?*

Reliability across observers,  
time & location



## *Monitoring Quality: How?*

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- Fair
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- Include objective measures
  - Reduce self-presentation bias
  - Provide rich feedback
- Efficient
  - Cost of monitoring must be minimized

## *Monitoring Quality: How?*

*Quality measures must be:*

- Fair
- Include objective measures
- Efficient

To achieve these standards quality monitoring must be *empirically based*

## *Monitoring Quality: What the City does*

**The City operates an accountability system that meets all of these criteria**



## *Monitoring Quality: What the City does*

- Developed their own measure – the Operating Criteria

36 observational items on a 4-point scale  
Capture the following constructs:

- Physical Environment
- Interactions
- Structure of the Day
- Activities/Experiences Planned
- Learning
- Physical Needs
- Health and Safety



## *Monitoring Quality: What the City does*

- Conducts annual assessments
- Tested the validity of the Operating Criteria
- Developed/implemented a protocol for conducting assessments
- This took many years and a lot of “brain power”



*Monitoring Quality: How*

## **Operating Criteria**

- Valid, efficient, global, Canadian
- Administration takes much less time than other measures do





## *Monitoring Quality: Barriers?*

### Culture

The city has done a wonderful job of overcoming resistance from various parties

### Cost

Not so large when we keep the magnitude of spending in mind.



## Conclusions:

- **The city of Toronto is running a high quality accountability system that serves multiple purposes**
- **It is running the system in an empirically based, fair and cost efficient way**
- **The city is the national leader in this area**



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