

Maryland EXCELS Validation Study
January 1, 2014 - June 30, 2016



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Maryland children and families are fortunate to have so many dedicated individuals working hard to ensure quality child care and preschool education is the norm in Maryland.

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MARYLAND EXCELS VALIDATION STUDY

Submitted To: Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Development

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COHORT 1

Cycle One October 2014

Cycle Two November 2015

Cycle Three June 2016

COHORT 2

Cycle One January 2016

Cycle Two June 2016

All Programs

July 2013 through November 2016

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Executive Summary

This report examines the data collection efforts for the validation of the Maryland EXCELS Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and will report on the findings against three Validation Approaches (Zellman & Fiene, 2012) evaluating the quality of programs that volunteered to participate in the first cycle of data collection ending in November 2015. A total of 355 programs in two time-staggered cohorts participated in the validation process: 256 (72%) were Center Based and 99 (28%) were Family Providers; 169 (48%) were accredited and 209 (59%) reported receiving Child Care Subsidy payments. Four assessment instruments were used for the concurrent validation study: The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS™), The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R), The Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised (FCCERS-R), and the Scale for Teachers' Assessment of Routines Engagement (STARE). Additionally, all programs in Maryland EXCELS as of November 2016 were examined to determine characteristics of participating programs. This included a total population of 6,327 programs, with 3,604 programs having a published rating. Five evaluation questions were addressed:

1. What are the characteristics of programs participating in the Maryland EXCELS Validation Study?
 - Of twenty-four Maryland jurisdictions, four jurisdictions have 35% of their programs published at Quality Rating 3 or higher, thirteen jurisdictions have 11% or more of their programs at Quality Rating 3 or higher; and seven jurisdictions have 10% or less of programs published at Quality Rating 3 or higher. The top-density group are rural areas.
 - Based on program-reported enrollment, 169,829 children attended Maryland EXCELS programs between July 2013 and November 2016. 57% were served by Centers, 16% by

Family Child Care Homes, 18% by School-Age programs, and 9% by Public Prekindergarten programs.

- 25% (n= 26,990) of children were enrolled in programs that achieved Quality Rating 3 or higher.
 - The majority of children attending Maryland EXCELS programs in areas with high population density (such as Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Prince George’s County, and Montgomery County) attend programs that have achieved a Quality Rating of 1 and collectively account for 23.8% of all children enrolled in Maryland EXCELS programs during the study period.
 - 25,949 staff/providers worked in Maryland EXCELS programs over the course of the study period.
 - 2,595 programs reported receiving Child Care Subsidy payments, with 1,657 of those having achieved a published quality rating.
 - 11.3% (n=504) of programs participating in the study were accredited.
2. Is there variability between programs on each quality indicator of Maryland EXCELS? Do component measures that claim five scales actually have five scales?
- The CLASS™ instrument did not differentiate Maryland EXCELS ratings; by Program Type, the Center Based programs had a lack of differentiation at the lower and upper ends of the Maryland EXCELS scale and the Family Child Care Homes had no discrimination between Maryland EXCELS ratings.
 - The ECERS-R instrument results found that the Personal Care & Routines, Activities, and Parents & Staff demonstrated a slight linear trend with Maryland EXCELS levels, indicating some discrimination by these subscales among Maryland EXCELS ratings.

- The FCCERS-R instrument results found the subscales Listening & Talking and Parents & Provider demonstrated a slight linear trend, indicating some discrimination by these subscales among Maryland EXCELS ratings.
 - The STARE instrument results did not differentiate Maryland EXCELS ratings; by Program Type, the Center Based programs had a lack of differentiation at all Maryland EXCELS ratings and Family Child Care Homes demonstrated good linearity for Engagement Check and Overall Engagement.
3. How are the Maryland EXCELS quality indicators related to each other? Do measures of similar concepts relate more closely to each other than to other measures?
- Regression of CLASS™ and ERS scores on the Maryland EXCELS scores indicated ERS_Parents & Providers and ERS_Activities were the only significant predictors of Maryland EXCEL levels. With control variables included, Accreditation and ERS_Parents & Providers were the only significant predictors of Maryland EXCELS levels.
 - Regression of CLASS™ scores and the ERS subscale Interaction on the Maryland EXCELS scores indicated ERS_Interaction was the only significant predictor of Maryland EXCELS levels. With control variables included, Accreditation and ERS_Interaction were the only significant predictors of Maryland EXCELS levels.
4. Do providers who receive higher Maryland EXCELS quality ratings also receive high scores on the CLASS™? What relationship exists between Maryland EXCELS, CLASS™, ERS, and STARE scores?
- The CLASS™ scores demonstrated no significant positive relationships with Maryland EXCELS quality ratings regardless of program type, accreditation, and Child Care Subsidy payments.

- All ECERS-R subscales demonstrated significant positive relationships with Maryland EXCELS quality ratings. Controlling for other variables, programs not receiving Child Care Subsidy payments (NO) also had significant positive relationships between ECERS-R and Maryland EXCELS quality ratings. Center Based programs most often had the ECERS-R subscale Parents & Staff correlated with Maryland EXCELS quality ratings.
 - Five FCCERS-R subscales demonstrated significant positive relationships with Maryland EXCELS quality ratings. Controlling for other variables, accredited programs had significant positive relationships between FCCERS-R and Maryland EXCELS quality ratings. Family Child Care Homes had the FCCERS-R Subscale Activities most often correlated with Maryland EXCELS quality ratings.
 - None of the STARE scores demonstrated significant positive relationships with Maryland EXCELS quality ratings. Controlling for other variables, accredited programs and Family Child Care Providers had significant positive relationships between STARE and Maryland EXCELS quality ratings. Overall Engagement most often correlated with Maryland EXCELS quality ratings.
5. How do Maryland EXCELS quality ratings change over time for programs?
- Nearly 63% of participating programs in Cohort 1 had no change in Maryland EXCELS quality ratings but 27% of programs improved their Maryland EXCELS quality ratings from Cycle One to Cycle Three.
 - 22% (n=797) of all published programs (N=3,604) in Maryland EXCELS improved their quality rating by at least one level during the study period.

Recommendations

- Continue ongoing evaluation and validation of Maryland EXCELS to monitor its impact on quality programs in the state. Child Level outcomes and the use of other quality measures with a sampling methodology should be a part of future evaluation and validation reports.
- Include more Family Providers in the participant pool to increase the strength of the analysis.
- Either consider using three Maryland EXCELS quality ratings instead of five, or look to implement criteria that are more distinguishable between Levels 1 and 2, and between Levels 4 and 5.
- Implement larger onsite monitoring and verification efforts to identify programs' implementation practices that are reflective of their submitted evidence. Monitoring will also identify programs in need of support and technical assistance.
- Review the Maryland EXCELS quality rating criteria and adjust the ratings for reanalysis of these data and to model future data collection.
- Implement greater targeted improvement strategies, such as program improvement planning and goal setting to help programs, particularly in large urban areas, increase their ratings.
- Implement external observational assessment across all levels as part of the QRIS rating process to ensure a larger collection of validation points of quality ratings.

To receive a full copy of the Maryland EXCELS validation study,
please contact us at idealsinstitute@jhu.edu