

**Activity 4.3: Race to the Top / Early Learning Challenge
Support to Enter TQRIS
2015 Final Report**

Contract Number
SWCDC 27714

Submitted to the:
North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education

On behalf of:
Southwestern Child Development Commission (SWCDC)

Child Care Resources Inc.
4600 Park Road, Suite 400
Charlotte, NC 28209
Phone: (704) 376-6697
Fax: (704) 376-7865
www.childcareresourcesinc.org

Child Care Services Association
P.O. Box 901
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
Phone: (919) 967-3272
Fax: (919) 967-7683
www.childcareservices.org

Southwestern Child Development
Commission
P.O. Box 250
Webster, NC 28788
Phone: (828) 586-5561
Fax: (828) 586-4039
www.swcdcinc.org

Introduction

Nationally, North Carolina has been a leader in the early care and education field and it is with much appreciation that the North Carolina Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Council works with the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education to advance this system. This report will provide a summary of the accomplishments of the Race to the Top/Early Learning Challenge Grants (RttT-ELC): Activity 4.3 – Support to Enter TQRIS. A summary of the accomplishments of this initiative throughout the project, including subjective information about lessons learned, challenges, successes and any implications across projects for future policy decisions has been included in this report.

Activity 4.3: Support to Enter TQRIS

The intent of this initiative was to provide technical assistance and financial mini-grants to public school Pre-K programs that were currently unlicensed and to religious programs that were operating with a GS-110 religious exemption and were willing to enter a contract agreement to achieve licensure through the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education (NC DCDEE). Southwestern Child Development Commission Inc. (SWCDC) contracted with the NC DCDEE to manage this grant activity.

SWCDC conducted a statewide recruitment and application campaign to all public pre-k programs and GS-110 operating programs. Under the direction of the Deputy Director of SWCDC and a grant coordinator hired specifically to oversee this activity, Regional Lead Agencies (RLAs) provided technical assistance specialists that supported GS-110 religious exception programs to meet at a minimum the 3-star standards and to assist public pre-k programs to meet the standards for and obtain a 4 or 5 star license. Once the plan was developed, the TA staff provided guidance to the programs for making application for mini-grants provided through the RttT-ELC grant that supported the implementation of the plans.

At the beginning of the grant cycle, all public pre-k programs listed with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) were identified. Additionally, all GS-110 operating programs were identified through information available from the NC DCDEE. Statewide, a total of 88 public pre-k programs were approved to participate in the grant activity. Additionally, a total of 14 GS-110 operating programs were approved to participate. Please see chart on the next page for achievement of specific performance measures:

RttT ELC Final Progress Report for Support to Enter TQRIS

Outputs Year 3 2015	Final Results Year 3 2015
Technical assistance will continue as needed to GS-110 programs.	Technical assistance and contract monitoring continued through the grant cycle as needed.
Remaining grant funds will be distributed to qualifying programs.	By the conclusion of the grant cycle, all remaining grant funds for both GS-110 programs and public pre-k programs were distributed.

<p>The final report for the project will be presented to DCDEE which includes data about recruitment of both target groups, star ratings achieved and maintained by participants in the grant, technical assistance, and evaluation of the process.</p>	<p>Please see this document as evidence of this output.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Outcomes Year 3 2015</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Final Results Year 3 2015</p>
<p>At the conclusion of the grant cycle, there will be a 25% reduction in the number of unlicensed public pre-k programs still in operation as compared to the number of operating programs at the beginning of the grant cycle.</p>	<p>EXCEEDED. At the conclusion of the grant cycle, there was a 78% reduction in the number of unlicensed public pre-k programs as compared to the number of operating programs in the beginning. The original baseline data had a total of 232 unlicensed public pre-k programs in operation at the beginning of the grant cycle. At the conclusion of the grant cycle, 180 of those programs had achieved a 4- or 5- star license through the NC DCDEE. 52 of those original programs remain unlicensed.</p>
<p>At the conclusion of the grant cycle, 75% of public pre-k programs who achieved a 4 or 5 star license while participating in this grant will have maintained the 4 or 5 star license.</p>	<p>EXCEEDED. At the conclusion of the grant cycle, 100% of the public pre-k programs who achieved a 4 or 5 star license while participating in this grant have maintained the 4 or 5 star license. In fact, some programs who originally received a 4 star license in the earlier stages of the grant cycle have now increased their star rating to 5 stars.</p>
<p>At the conclusion of the grant cycle, 90% of the participating GS-110 programs still in operation will have achieved a star rated license.</p>	<p>NOT MET. At the conclusion of the grant cycle, 71% of the participating GS-110 programs still in operation have achieved a star rated license.</p>
<p>At the conclusion of the grant cycle, 50% of the participating GS-110 programs still in operation who have achieved a star rated license will have achieved a 3 or higher star license.</p>	<p>EXCEEDED. At the conclusion of the grant cycle, 100% of the participating GS-110 programs who achieved a star rated license have a achieved a 3 or higher star license.</p>
<p>At the conclusion of the grant cycle, 75% of the participating GS-110 programs still in operation who have achieved a star rated license will have maintained that level of license or higher.</p>	<p>EXCEEDED. At the conclusion of the grant cycle, 100% of the participating GS-110 programs still in operation who have achieved a star rated license have maintained that level of license or higher.</p>

At the conclusion of the grant cycle, no more than 6% of children in regulated programs will be in GS-110 sites.	NOT MET. At the conclusion of the grant cycle, 7.5% of children in regulated programs were in GS-110 sites.
--	--

Public Pre-K Programs:

- 232 unlicensed public pre-k programs were identified at the beginning of the grant cycle. Of these 232 programs, 180 now hold a 4- or 5- star license with NC DCDEE. 52 of those original programs remain unlicensed. 49% of these 180 programs (88 programs) participated in the grant activity.
- 92 unlicensed public pre-k programs made application to SWCDC to participate in the Rttt-ELC activity Support to Enter TQRIS. Of those 92, **88 programs** were accepted to participate in the activity.
- Of these 88 participating programs, **98%** (86 out of 88) were successful in achieving a 4 or 5 star license.
- Of those 86 programs achieving a star rated license, **48 are 5 star facilities and 38 are 4 star facilities.** 100% of these programs have either maintained or increased their licensure over the course of the grant cycle.
- There are **2,568** children served by these 86 participating programs.

GS-110 Operating Programs:

- 15 GS-110 programs applied to participate in this activity to enter TQRIS.
- Of these 15 programs, **5 programs** have achieved a star rated license. There are two 5 star programs and three 4 star programs. 100% of these programs are in operation.
- **426** children are currently served in these programs.
- One program closed during their participation in the grant activity.
- Six programs chose not to participate in the activity after they received their initial acceptance into the program (no funds were distributed). The terms of the contract agreement expired.

The Support to Enter TQRIS Grant activity was successful in providing technical assistance and financial assistance to public pre-k programs seeking licensure. Funds provided allowed public school systems the means to meet child care building, fire and sanitation standards as well as materials and equipment for classroom set up. The technical assistance provided by RLA staff was a key component in the process toward licensure. Additionally, the collaborative relationship between SWCDC staff, RLA staff, and DCDEE licensing consultants across the state enabled the process towards successful licensure for 86 public pre-k programs.

Challenges/Lessons Learned:

- The participatory response of GS-110 programs was much lower than originally anticipated. RLAs were asked to survey GS-110 programs within their region to determine their interest, and if not, why they were not interested in pursuing licensure. Reasons included issues around corporal punishment, curriculum, lack of support from church staff and boards of directors, parent satisfaction with current quality of care, waiting lists of children wishing to attend their facility, and the level of work needed to achieve and maintain licensure with the state.
- The GS-110 grant recipients were discouraged about the amount of time it took for them to complete the obligations. It took several centers 2 years to complete the process. Many of these centers struggled with the separation of church and state. This caused them to delay the process because of their reservations. Additional education and focus groups around these issues and the advantages of licensure needs to continue across the state.
- There were 6 programs who applied for the grant but did not follow through with the process. One of the challenges was the difficulty that the programs had in producing funds up front to purchase materials identified through the Quality Improvement Plan and then wait to receive their reimbursement. While SWCDC had several conversations with programs about the timing of invoices and reimbursements in order for them to receive funds before the actual invoice was due, this still does not seem to make a difference for many of them.
- Terms of the grant agreement between the public pre-k programs and the GS-110 programs were sometimes vague, especially in terms of consequences of not fulfilling grant requirements (reimbursement of funds, retrieval of equipment, etc.). In future endeavors, contract managers should pay particular attention to these specifications in the grant agreement.
- While terms of the grant agreement stipulate that programs will be monitored for three years for maintaining licensure, the grant activity has ended and there is no accommodation for continuing this monitoring. If a facility failed to maintain their licensure, there is no available means to retrieve funds or equipment as this grant activity is closed.

Recommendations:

- Seek additional funding to support hiring and training of additional TA and professional development staff to support GS-110 facilities in improving quality of programming with a more long-term goal of helping them to achieve licensure.
- There should be a long term plan for maintaining high quality and licensure after the grant has been awarded and fulfilled. Ways should be explored to determine how DCDEE regulatory staff and CCR&R technical assistance staff can provide TA to public pre-k programs and GS-110 programs in order to help them maintain licensure.
- Continue collaborations between DCDEE regulatory and CCR&R technical assistance staff.

- Seek additional funding to support quality initiatives within child care programs.

Regional Success Stories

Nazarene Christian School

Smart Start Quality Enhancement Specialists and the Child Care Health Consultant helped our center move from a GS110 to a four-star licensed facility. They spent a great deal of time at our center and were very helpful in working with all of our staff, explaining best practices, and helping us provide a higher quality of care for the children. It was a great accomplishment and we are so proud of our success.

Note: The Race Grant received by Nazarene Christian School provided this center with the ability to move forward and achieve a 4 star.

Trimont Christian Academy

The funds received from the Race Grant allowed Trimont to move from GS110 to a 4 star. It took this center 2 years to receive there 4 star. Macon County has a shortage of childcare available in the area and this center has the capacity to take 230 children. With the increase in stars they will be able to draw more money from Child Care Subsidy and support there center in a more viable way.