

QUALITY START TRANSITION TO LETTER GRADES Frequently Asked Questions

As Louisiana transitions from the Quality Start star rating system to the letter grade system called for by Act 3 (2012), providers will continue to benefit from the financial incentives associated with Quality Start until letter grades are released for the 2016-17 school year.

1. Is Quality Start going away?

Louisiana is in a multi-year transition to unify early childhood and improve kindergarten readiness. Quality Start has been an effective system at guiding providers to higher quality and the state will continue to build on that work. Quality Start is not going away, but is transitioning to the letter grade system called for by Act 3 (2012).

2. What is the main difference between Quality Start and the letter grade system?

Quality Start and the letter grade system will be closely aligned. Both are based on best practices in early childhood. The key difference between Quality Start and the letter grade system is the observation tool. Quality Start has used the Environment Rating Scales (*ECERS* and *ITERS*) while the letter grade system will use the *CLASSroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)*. Both tools are aligned, but *CLASS* is more focused on interactions between teachers and children.

3. What are the differences between a Type I, II and III centers? How does that relate to Quality Start?

Type I – Defined as early learning centers owned or operated by a church or religious organization that do not take any public funding

- Includes former Class B centers, including non-religious organizations that were grandfathered in

Type II - Defined as early learning centers that either take no public funding or only take food and nutrition funding

- Includes some former Class A centers
- Centers that participate in Quality Start are considered publicly-funded and therefore cannot be Type II

Type III - Defined as early learning centers that take public funding (CCAP, NSECD, Head Start/Early Head Start, etc.) and/or are star-rated as of July 1, 2015

- Includes some former Class A
- Does not include public or nonpublic schools

4. What if I decide to become a Type II Center?

Any child care center with a current star rating will transition to Type III in summer 2015. If any of these centers then decide to become Type II, their star rating will expire December 31, 2015. Any center wishing to participate in Quality Start or the letter grade system after 2015 must

become Type III. By being Type III, the center will benefit from SRTC, bonuses, and participating in Community Networks.

5. Do I have to serve CCAP children to be Type III?

You do not have to currently serve CCAP children to become a Type III center. However, you must be authorized to accept CCAP children. For more information about how to become authorized to accept CCAP children please click [here](#).

6. If I participate in Quality Start now but don't serve CCAP children, what happens to me?

If you are currently quality rated, you will be converted to a Type III center this summer. By being Type III, your center will be required to participate in the letter grade system and you can benefit from Community Networks, SRTC, and CCAP bonuses. If you choose to become a Type II center instead, your current star rating will expire December 31, 2015, and you will no longer be eligible to receive SRTC, CCAP bonuses, or serve children receiving CCAP.

7. When will my star rating change to a letter grade?

All publicly-funded providers will participate in the letter grade Learning Year in 2015-2016 school year. However, letter grades during the 2015-2016 school year will not have any consequences. The 2016-2017 school year will be the first year for letter grades and the last year for star ratings.

8. If I am not star rated now, can I apply for stars?

Yes, all publicly-funded providers are encouraged to earn at least a one star rating, so eligible teachers and directors benefit from the School Readiness Tax Credit (SRTC). All providers who wish to apply for new stars, or improved stars, must apply by February 1, 2016. If you wish to apply, contact your [specialist](#). For more information, click [here](#).

9. If I am a Type III center without a star rating, why should I apply for Quality Start now?

All publicly-funded providers are encouraged to earn at least a one star rating, so teachers and directors benefit from the School Readiness Tax Credit (SRTC). The SRTC serves as an important wage supplement for teachers pursuing higher credentials. All providers who wish to apply for new stars, or improved stars, must apply by February 1, 2016.

10. If I have a star rating now can I increase my star rating?

Yes, all publicly-funded providers are encouraged to pursue higher star ratings. Not only do higher star ratings result in increased financial benefits from SRTC and bonuses, centers doing well on the Environmental Rating Scale are better positioned to score well on *CLASS*.

11. When is the last date to apply for new or higher stars?

All providers who wish to apply for new stars, or improved stars, must apply by February 1, 2016.

12. If I have a change of owner or change of location after July 1, 2016, can I transfer my current rating?

No, a change of owner or change of location application will not be accepted after July 1, 2016. There will be no activity related to Quality Start after July 1, 2016, but star ratings will remain in effect for publicly-funded providers until June 30, 2017.

13. Will School Readiness Tax Credits for the 2016 tax year be based on my Quality Start Rating?

Yes, financial incentives and rewards will remain based on star ratings through the 2016 tax year. However, you must be a Type III center. Starting with 2017, SRTC will be based on the provider's letter grade.

14. What will my School Readiness Tax Credits be based on for the 2017 tax year?

The 2017 SRTC will be the first year that uses letter grades to determine tax credits. The letter grade will be the result of performance in the 2016-17 school year.