



**Alabama Quality STARS:
Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)
Guidelines**

Alabama Quality STARS
Quality Rating and Improvement System

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
<u>OVERVIEW</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>1.00 REGULATORY AUTHORITY</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>2.00 PURPOSE</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>3.00 ACRONYMS</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>4.00 DEFINITIONS</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>5.00 AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>6.00 ELIGIBILITY</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>7.00 STAR RATING CRITERIA</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>8.00 BEST PRACTICE RUBRIC</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>9.00 CLASS SCORING MODEL</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>10.00 APPLICATION</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>11.00 MAINTAINING A STAR RATING</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>12.00 CHANGES IN STAR RATING</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>13.00 REVIEW AND APPEAL PROCESS</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>14.00 INCENTIVE MODEL</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>15.00 GUIDED SUPPORT MODEL</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>16.00 ENHANCEMENT MODEL</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>17.00 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROTOCOL</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>18.00 APPENDICES</u>	<u>25</u>

OVERVIEW

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

Alabama Quality STARS: Quality Rating and Improvement System

QRIS, or Quality Rating and Improvement System, is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early childhood education programs. QRIS will award STAR levels to early childhood education programs that meet a set of defined program standards. QRIS measures these standards of quality childcare by utilizing standardized, research-based criteria. By participating in Alabama Quality STARS, early care and education providers will embark on a path of continuous quality improvement.

Alabama Quality STARS is committed to recognizing a program's strength while providing support to develop a plan for improvement. These supports will include technical assistance, training, and financial incentives. The following guidelines will provide a road map for providers participating in the system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

The development of the Alabama Quality STARS: Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is the result of the collaboration between the Alabama Department of Human Resources and stakeholders statewide. The Alabama Department of Human Resources would like to acknowledge all stakeholders who assisted in the 2022 or 2024 updates of these guidelines.

Alabama Department of Human Resources

Nancy Buckner, Commissioner

Faye Nelson, Deputy Commissioner

Bernard Houston, Administrator, Childcare Services and Workforce Development, Child Care Services Division

Candice Keller, Program Manager, Office of Child Care Subsidy, Child Care Services Division

Shaunda Reaves, Program Specialist, Office of Child Care Subsidy, Child Care Services Division

Tracy Fuller, Program Manager, Child Care Services Division

Dr. Heather Scott, Program Specialist-Quality Coordinator, Child Care Services Division

Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education

Dr. Jan Hume, Acting Secretary

Dr. Barbara Cooper, Former Secretary

Dr. Pamela Truelove-Walker, Former Senior Director, Early Learning and School Readiness

Joy Winchester, Former Director, Office of Early Childhood Development and Professional Support

Jo Lee-Lindstrom, Administrative Assistant, Office of Early Childhood Development and Professional Support

Kellie Holcomb, Program Director, QRIS Team

Melissa Beeson, Communication and Information Specialist, QRIS Team

Ciara Alford, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Anna Barlow, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Kara Cosby, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Theresa Dalton, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Amber Weeks Edwards, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Cynthia Garner, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Sarah Jones, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Rachel Kitsos, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Symone Mixon, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Virginia Mostellar, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Amanda Pate, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Tyesha Powell, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Tracy Richards, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Marche Scott, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Michelle Shelton, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Courtney Shivetts, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Shannon Stewart, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Virginia Tharp, Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Ashley Peebles, Former Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team
Alicia Thurmond, Former Alabama Quality STARS Specialist, QRIS Team

Quality Rating and Improvement System Advisory Council

*Advisory Council listing accurate as of September 2022

Chair: Kay Jennings, Executive Director, TCR Childcare Corporation

Co-Chair: Mary S. Davis, Executive Director, Childcare Resource Network

Dr. Alison Hooper, University of Alabama, Content Expert Consult

Sara Bates, Preschool Director, First Presbyterian Preschool

Rachel Bunning, Vice President, External Affairs, The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham

James Ernest, Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Alabama at Birmingham

John Gilchrist, Alabama Governor's Office

Karen Jared, Partnership Liaison, Community Action Partnership of North Alabama

Rhonda Mann, Interim Executive Director, VOICES for Alabama's Children

Caroline Martin, Managing Director, Auburn University Family Child Care Partnerships

Nick Moore, Alabama Governor's Office

Allison Muhlenhof, Executive Director, Alabama School Readiness Alliance

Kris Rowe, Community Action Agency of Alabama

Searcy Rushing, Head Start Director, Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

Collier Tynes, CEO, VOICES for Alabama's Children

Tammy Walker, Partnership for Children Council

Walter White, Executive Director, Family Guidance Center of Alabama

1.00 REGULATORY AUTHORITY

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

- 1.01 These guidelines are issued on the behalf of the Alabama Department of Human Resources, Child Care Services Division, Office of Childcare Subsidy and shall provide governance to the Alabama Quality STARS: Quality Rating and Improvement System.
- 1.02 Alabama Quality STARS is administered by the Alabama Department of Human Resources, Child Care Services Division.

2.00 PURPOSE

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

Alabama Quality STARS: Quality Rating and Improvement System is intended to improve the quality of early care and education programs through the alignment and coordination of systemwide initiatives. Alabama Quality STARS will offer programs the opportunity to:

- Increase quality of early care and education services.
- Increase parents' understanding and demand for higher quality early care and education.
- Increase professional development opportunities, benchmarks, and rewards for a range of early care and education practitioners and providers.
- Create a cross-sector framework that can link standards, technical assistance, monitoring, finance, and consumer engagement for programs in a range of settings, including family childcare homes, childcare centers, school-based programs, Head Start programs, early intervention, and others.
- Develop a roadmap for aligning many pieces of the early care and education system, such as childcare licensing, prekindergarten and Head Start program oversight, national program accreditation, early learning guidelines, subsidy administration, technical assistance, training, quality initiatives, professional development systems, and others.

3.00 ACRONYMS

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

ADECE	Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education
AlaCEED	Alabama Childcare and Early Education Dashboard
BPR	Best Practice Rubric
CLASS	Classroom Assessment Scoring System
DHR	Department of Human Resources
QRIS	Quality Rating and Improvement System

4.00 DEFINITIONS

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

In the context of these guidelines, the following definitions apply.

- 1. Aggregate.** Collect and tabulate results to calculate a total.
- 2. Aggregate Score.** Calculated by averaging all CLASS dimension scores for all observation cycles together.
- 3. Curriculum.** Guide for teachers and administrators to intentionally implement activities and approaches that include goals to maximize children's development and learning with planned activities, daily schedules, routines, and materials linked to their goals.
- 4. Day Care Center.** A childcare facility which receives more than twelve (12) children for daytime care during all or part of the day.
- 5. Developmentally Appropriate.** Appropriate for the age span and developmental levels of the children; promoting each child's optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play based approach to joyful, engaged learning.
- 6. Family Day Care Home.** A childcare facility inside a family home that receives no more than 6 children for care during the day.
- 7. Group Day Care Home.** A childcare facility which is a family home, and which receives at least seven (7), but no more than twelve (12) children for care during the part of the day where there are at least two (2) adults present and supervising the activities.
- 8. Technical Assistance.** Commonly referred to as consulting. The process of providing targeted support to a childcare facility in order to develop quality and build capacity.

5.00 AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

- 5.01 The Alabama Department of Human Resources, Child Care Services Division will coordinate and administer the Alabama Quality STARS: Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).
- 5.02 The Alabama Quality STARS Team will be responsible for the process of rating programs who apply to participate in the Alabama Quality STARS QRIS.
- 5.03 The Alabama Quality STARS Program Director will have final approval of applications for STAR ratings as reviewed and recommended by the Alabama Quality STARS Team.
- 5.04 By October 31st annually the Division Director will be responsible for providing verification to the Commissioner of the centers that received STAR ratings in the previous fiscal year.
- 5.05 The Alabama Quality STARS Team will provide technical assistance to programs desiring to participate in the guided and enhancement models to support Alabama Quality STARS QRIS.
- 5.06 The Alabama Quality STARS Team in collaboration with the DHR, Child Care Services Division will be responsible for the process of calculating the STAR ratings to programs.
- 5.07 Programs in the assessment model of Alabama Quality STARS will be notified virtually within 30 days by the Alabama Quality STARS Program Director of their earned STAR rating.

6.00 ELIGIBILITY

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

- 6.01 All licensed programs, including childcare centers, family day care homes, and group day care homes, that have been licensed for at least one year are eligible to apply to work with Alabama Quality STARS, whether for assessment or to participate in a technical assistance model. Programs that cannot be licensed by DHR according to the Code of Alabama 1975, Section 38-7-2, (4), (e.g. military, public schools, Alabama Community College System, university, Tribal, etc.) may also apply for a STAR rating after they have been in operation for at least one year. All applicants will be evaluated by the Alabama Quality STARS team to calculate their STAR rating.
- 6.02 Programs with multiple center locations that each have a separate license number, must apply for a STAR rating for each center. Each center location will be evaluated by the Alabama Quality STARS team to receive their STAR rating.
- 6.03 Programs must be in “good standing” with DHR. Centers and Family or Group Day Care Homes in “good standing” are those that are not currently under adverse action and meet all current Licensing Standards. Centers that cannot be licensed by DHR must have written policies and procedures for addressing parent and/or community complaints and documentation that there is follow through when complaints are received.
- 6.04 A STAR program that becomes the subject of an investigation may retain its current STAR rating until the investigation is concluded. The outcome of the investigation may be considered in the continuation of the STAR rating.
- 6.05 Programs must complete a QRIS application in AlaCEED in order to apply for the Assessment, Guided Support, or Enhancement models.
- In order to be eligible to participate in the Enhancement model, a program must have first completed a formal Assessment following the process outlined in the Guidelines below.
- 6.06 At least one staff connected to the program in AlaCEED must complete QRIS Orientation in order to apply for a STAR rating.

7.00 STAR RATING CRITERIA

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

7.01 Alabama Quality STAR ratings are divided into two categories: Foundational and Advanced STAR levels.

- The Foundational Levels encompass 1 STAR and 2 STAR ratings.
 - The Foundational Level of 1 STAR is awarded to all programs meeting Child Care Licensing and Performance Standards.
 - The 2 STAR Level builds upon Child Care Licensing and Performance Standards by incorporating the use of the BPR.
- The Advanced STAR Levels encompass 3 STAR, 4 STAR, and 5 STAR ratings.

7.02 1 STAR Rating: This is earned through meeting and maintaining all licensing standards in the current Alabama DHR Licensing Performance Standards. Programs are assessed by childcare consultants employed by DHR.

7.03 2 STAR Rating: Programs earning a 2 STAR rating have exceeded the licensing standards to put foundational elements of quality in place. 2 STAR programs are prioritizing quality, willing to challenge themselves, and building a strong foundation to benefit their children, families, and program staff. A 2 STAR Rating is calculated with only the BPR score to measure foundations of quality implemented. **To earn a 2 STAR rating, the site needs a minimum of 40 points on the BPR.** CLASS observations are conducted for informational purposes only.

7.04 3 STAR Rating: Programs earning a 3 STAR rating have embraced foundational quality and continued to strengthen that foundation. The focus on teacher-child interactions is indicative of how teachers are effectively supporting children's social and academic development. A 3 STAR rating is calculated with the BPR and the aggregate score from CLASS observations. **To earn a 3 STAR rating, the site needs a minimum of 80 points on the BPR and a minimum of 30 CLASS points.**

7.05 4 STAR Rating: Programs earning the 4 STAR rating have empowered their teams to achieve even higher levels of quality. The foundation is there, the interactions are getting stronger, and the whole program is moving as a team to implement program-wide quality initiatives. CLASS scores are proficient, and the BPR scores show consistency across the program. A 4 STAR rating is calculated with the BPR and the aggregate score from CLASS observations. **To earn a 4 STAR rating, the site needs a minimum of 95 points on the BPR and a minimum of 40 CLASS points.**

7.06 5 STAR Rating: Programs earning the 5 STAR rating are building strong capacity in their teams through internal on-going development and by valuing quality foundations. Consistent levels of high quality are evident program-wide, and the administration has adopted solid business practices. A 5 STAR rating is calculated with the BPR and the aggregate score from CLASS observations. **To earn a 5 STAR rating, the site needs a minimum of 110 points on the BPR and a minimum of 50 CLASS points.**

7.07 Scoring Calculator Model

[See Appendix 18.01](#)

A STAR rating is assigned based on scoring requirements on the BPR and CLASS. To earn a STAR Rating, the minimum requirement must be met in both the BPR Points and CLASS Score Points. (CLASS Score Points are determined by taking the average of all dimension scores from each class observed and multiplying it by 10, with a total of 70 CLASS Score Points possible. More information about the CLASS Scoring Model can be found in [Section 9.00 CLASS Scoring Model](#).)

STAR Rating Scoring Chart

	2 STAR	3 STAR	4 STAR	5 STAR
Total Minimum BPR Points (130 possible)	40 points	80 points	95 points	110 points
Total Minimum CLASS Score Points (70 possible)	N/A	30 points	40 points	50 points

For example, if a program scores 100 points on the Best Practice Rubric and 35 points on CLASS score points, the program would meet the minimum requirements for a 3 STAR rating.

8.00 BEST PRACTICE RUBRIC

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

8.01 The domains and indicators of the BPR have been identified as markers of quality. They have been established by experts in the field of early childhood education, validated by research, and developed from recognized resources to provide incremental progressions of quality.

8.02 The domains of the BPR include:

- Curriculum and Instruction
- Screening and Assessment
- Family Engagement
- Professional Credential
- Environment
- Program Design

8.03 Each domain of the BPR includes a series of indicators, each of which have been assigned a point value. The rubric is designed to be cumulative so that programs can select only those indicators that fit the structure of their program.

9.00 CLASS SCORING MODEL

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

9.01 CLASS cycles and length: CLASS observations will be conducted by a CLASS-reliable observer.

- CLASS assessments will consist of 4 cycles of 15-20 minutes of observation.
 - In the Assessment model, CLASS assessments will be conducted on *at least* 50% of classes per age group.

9.02 Mixed age group process:

- In mixed-age kindergarten/Pre-K classrooms, the Pre-K tool should be used if the classroom is a majority pre-K *or* if the classroom receives early childhood funding.
- In mixed-age Pre-K/toddler classrooms, the Pre-K tool should be used if the classroom is a majority (or at least half) Pre-K.
- In mixed-age toddler/infant classrooms, the Toddler tool should be used if the classroom is a majority (or at least half) toddler. The infant tool should only be used if the classroom is a majority infant.
- In classrooms that are a mix of infant, toddler, and Pre-K children, the classrooms will be observed using the tool appropriate for the majority of the class. **If there is a no clear majority among the three age groups, the Toddler tool will be used.**
- In Family/Group Day Care Homes settings, the Toddler tool will be used except in cases when all present children are in another age group.

9.03 Aggregate Process:

- The overall rating for each site is calculated by averaging all dimension scores (with the exception of Negative Climate) for all observation cycles together. Dimension scores are first calculated by using the four cycles of raw scores to create an average dimension score.
- The dimension scores from every domain and every observation count equally in the overall rating. Domain scores are never averaged together to create an overall rating.
- CLASS scores are aggregated with a maximum of 7 points, then multiplied by 10, resulting in the final CLASS Score Points.

9.04 Scoring Example: Sunnyville Early Learning Center site has 12 classrooms – two Pre-K, three toddler, and six infant. 1 Pre-K observation, 2 toddler observations, and 3 infant observations are included in this rating.

- Each Pre-K observation has 9 dimensions (excluding Negative Climate) which equals 9 Pre-K dimension scores.
- Each toddler observation has 7 dimensions (excluding Negative Climate), which equals 14 dimension scores.
- Each infant observation has 4 dimensions which equals 12 dimension scores.
- There are 35 total dimensions that are averaged together for the overall site rating. (Appendix 18.04 includes a sample scoring process for the above example.)

[See Appendices 18.04](#)

10.00 APPLICATION

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

10.01 To apply for a STAR rating, programs will complete an application through AlaCEED. The applying programs will select from three participation options: Assessment, Guided Support, or Enhancement.

- In order to be eligible to participate in the Enhancement model, a program must have first completed Assessment.

10.02 For Assessment applications, a program will be contacted by an Alabama Quality STARS Specialist to schedule an Assessment of the program. The program will be assessed using the BPR and the CLASS tool. Programs will gather their documentation for the BPR in advance of the Assessment visit, and the Alabama Quality STARS Specialist will score the rubric. If no documentation is prepared at the time of the Assessment visit, no further review or observation(s) will be conducted, and the Assessment will result in an automatic denial (no new STAR rating awarded). CLASS observations will be conducted on at least 50% of classrooms for each age group. (If the program qualifies for the 2 STAR rating, the aggregate score from CLASS observations serves as information for the program to plan improvements.) Scores will be used to assign the STAR rating to the program within 7 days of the Assessment visit.

10.03 For Guided Support applications, a program will request up to 2 months of individualized support to prepare for the Assessment process. An Alabama Quality STARS Specialist will be assigned to the program to answer specific questions, review documentation, and make individualized recommendations based on the BPR. The Alabama Quality STARS Specialist will provide a combination of remote support and on-site visits. After completion of the Guided Support model, a program will implement practices for a minimum of three (3) months, then apply for a formal Assessment to be completed.

10.04 For Enhancement applications, a program will request up to 6 months of technical assistance to build their program quality before the Assessment process. This entails a baseline needs assessment with the BPR and CLASS observation tools. From the data collected during the needs assessment, an action plan will be specifically created for each program based on need. The Enhancement model allows for dollars to be awarded so that a program's quality enhancement needs can be met with environment and materials. These dollars are awarded based on the data collected by the Alabama Quality STARS Specialist during the baseline needs assessment. After completion of the Enhancement model, a program will implement practices for a minimum of three (3) months, then apply for a formal assessment to be completed.

11.00 MAINTAINING A STAR LEVEL

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

- 11.01 Providers will receive the highest STAR rating at which all standards are met as determined by a review of presented documentation and assessment scores, as applicable. The center's STAR rating certificate must be posted in a conspicuous place in the center where it can be easily seen by parents/families and the public.
- 11.02 A STAR rating is valid for 3 years if yearly updates are received, unless the program becomes ineligible for a STAR rating according to Section 5.00 Eligibility or Section 12.00 Changes in STAR Rating.
- 11.03 STAR rated programs must apply to renew before the end of the third year. Failure to apply for renewal can jeopardize STAR rating status. A STAR rating will be granted based on meeting STARS standards as defined in Section 7.00 Criteria.
- 11.04 STAR rated programs seeking a higher STAR rating can apply one (1) year after the completion date of the last Assessment. A new Assessment application must be submitted in AlaCEED. A STAR rating will be granted based on meeting STARS standards as defined in Section 7.00 Criteria.
- 11.05 STAR rated programs that change location may retain the current STAR rating for up to three (3) months. During this time, a new Alabama Quality STARS Assessment application must be submitted. A STAR rating will be granted based on meeting STARS standards as defined in Section 7.00 Criteria.
- 11.06 STAR rated programs will receive an Annual Review to ensure that standards for the current STAR rating continue to be met. An Annual Review will consist of a document review and/or observation for select STAR criteria. An Annual Review may result in a change in STAR rating.
- 11.07 STAR rated programs may receive random, unannounced visits throughout the 36-month rating period. STAR reviews based on these visits may result in a change in STAR rating and/or recommended professional development, technical assistance, etc.

12.00 CHANGES IN STAR RATING

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

12.01 Changes in STAR rating include denial, reduction, or invalidation of rating status. Changes may result from:

- Ineligibility to participate according to Section 5.00 Eligibility;
- Application documentation that is incomplete or does not meet the criteria standards;
- Substantiation of complaints related to harm or death of a child; and/or
- Falsification of any document or submission of false information.

12.02 Programs that have an Alabama Quality STARS rating denied, reduced, or invalidated are eligible to re-apply after six (6) months, unless otherwise notified.

13.00 REVIEW AND APPEAL PROCESS

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

- 13.01 Programs may request to receive reports of Environment Checklists completed during the Assessment in addition to the summary information provided in AlaCEED. A written request, asking to review the Environment Checklist reports, must be submitted to the Alabama Quality STARS Program Director within thirty (30) days of the rating notification.
- 13.02 Programs may request an appeal if the program has a STAR rating reduced, invalidated, or denied or has a valid dispute concerning the Alabama Quality STARS Guidelines or program review procedures. A written request for appeal, detailing the specifics of the dispute and asking that the rating status decision be reviewed, must be submitted to the Alabama Quality STARS Program Director within thirty (30) days of the rating notification.
- The appeal review will evaluate whether Alabama Quality STARS procedures were followed but will not evaluate the accuracy of the Alabama Quality STARS Specialist's observations, responses, or scores.
- 13.03 Upon receipt of a request for appeal, the Alabama Quality STARS Program Director will conduct an internal review to ensure that the appropriate processes were followed and to determine the validity of the decision. The Secretary of the ADECE will review the findings with the Alabama Quality STARS Program Director and transmit the findings of the internal review to the program within thirty (30) days of receipt of the appeal request.
- 13.04 If the program finds the outcome of the internal review to be unsatisfactory, the program has ten (10) business days to request further review by the DHR Division Director. The DHR Division Director will conduct an internal review of the assessment process and the previous appeal. The decision of the DHR Division Director is the final decision.

14.00 INCENTIVE MODEL

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

Day Care Center Incentives:

Maximum Child Capacity	STAR 1	STAR 2	STAR 3	STAR 4	STAR 5
Up to 50	\$9,000	\$13,500	\$20,250	\$30,375	\$45,575
51-99	\$12,000	\$18,000	\$27,000	\$40,500	\$60,750
Over 100	\$16,000	\$24,000	\$36,000	\$54,000	\$81,000

Family or Group Day Care Homes Incentives:

Maximum Child Capacity	STAR 1	STAR 2	STAR 3	STAR 4	STAR 5
Group Day Care Home	\$3,000	\$5,500	\$7,750	\$11,000	\$14,300
Family Day Care Home	\$2,200	\$4,400	\$6,600	\$8,000	\$12,100

15.00 GUIDED SUPPORT MODEL

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

- 15.01 Programs will only be eligible to apply for the Guided Support model once they have been licensed for at least one year.
- 15.02 Programs that choose to enroll in the Guided Support model will receive up to two (2) months of guided support to prepare for the Assessment process.
- 15.03 Programs will be assigned an Alabama Quality STARS Specialist to answer specific questions, review documentation, and make individualized recommendations based on the BPR.
- 15.04 Alabama Quality STARS Specialists will work with a program's Director/Administrator to determine the level of needed support and create an action plan to prepare for Assessment.
- 15.05 Alabama Quality STARS Specialists will provide a combination of remote and in-person support with a maximum of two (2) monthly on-site visits.
- 15.06 Programs that have successfully completed the Guided Support model are eligible to re-apply for a technical assistance model after one (1) year, unless otherwise notified.
- Programs that have completed a technical assistance model must apply for Assessment for a STAR rating before they will be considered for participation in another technical assistance model.
- 15.07 After successful completion of the Guided Support model, programs will continue the practices established through technical assistance and document their implementation for a minimum of three (3) months. At that time, the program may apply for a formal assessment for a STAR rating.

16.00 ENHANCEMENT MODEL

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

- 16.01 Programs will only be eligible to apply for the Enhancement model once they have been licensed for at least one year and have completed an initial formal Assessment.
- 16.02 Programs with the greatest identified need will be prioritized for inclusion in the Enhancement model.
- 16.03 Programs that choose to apply and are selected for inclusion in the Enhancement model will receive up to six (6) months of enhancement to increase their overall STAR rating.
- 16.04 Programs will receive technical assistance to meet their needs based on the components of the BPR. Priorities will be created based on environmental improvements and supporting quality activities.
- 16.05 Programs will receive technical assistance and support to improve program-level quality initiatives based on the BPR and/or teaching practices represented in the CLASS tool to increase their overall CLASS Aggregate score.
- 16.06 Programs that have successfully completed the Enhancement model are eligible to re-apply for a technical assistance model after one (1) year, unless otherwise notified.
- Programs that have completed a technical assistance model must apply for Assessment for a STAR rating before they will be considered for participation in another technical assistance model.
- 16.07 After successful completion of the Enhancement model, programs will continue the practices established through technical assistance and document their implementation for a minimum of three (3) months. At that time, the program may apply for a formal assessment for a STAR rating.

17.00 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROTOCOL

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

- 17.01 Alabama Quality STARS Specialists will refer to a program's most recent Assessment as a baseline needs assessment, specifically the BPR scores. Baseline scores will be used to determine the focus of the Enhancement period.
- 17.02 Alabama Quality STARS Specialists will work with a program's Director/Administrator to review program-level STAR rating criteria. If necessary, programs will be provided with the materials needed to organize their BPR evidence. Alabama Quality STARS Specialists will share an overview of the BPR, review any prepared documentation, and provide guidance on remaining indicators. Alabama Quality STARS Specialists will make recommendations for financial enhancement, if applicable, and provide guidance for the use of enhancement funds. Alabama Quality STARS Specialists will meet with Directors/Administrators on an on-going basis throughout the Enhancement period.
- 17.03 For programs with a baseline BPR score of 79 or less, the BPR will be the primary focus of technical assistance. For programs with a baseline BPR score of 80 points or more, CLASS will be the primary focus of technical assistance. Alabama Quality STARS Specialists will work with Directors/Administrators and – depending on the needs and focus of the program – may also provide technical assistance for classroom(s) as needed.
- 17.04 Alabama Quality STARS Specialists will use baseline data to determine goals and action plans for the program and/or classroom. Alabama Quality STARS Specialists will make recommendations, provide strategies, and share resources that are designed to make targeted improvements based on the BPR or the CLASS tool.
- 17.05 On-going visits will be conducted based on a tiered schedule. Scores from the BPR and/or CLASS observation tool will determine the frequency and duration of Enhancement interactions.
- Enhancement Focus: BPR
 - Tier 1: Baseline BPR score of 0-39 points
 - In Tier 1, only the Director/Provider will be the direct recipient of technical assistance.
 - Tier 1 Directors/Providers will receive a minimum of two visits per month totaling 4 hours and 1 hour of remote support every other week, as needed.
 - Alabama Quality STARS Specialists will work with the Director/Provider to develop an action plan to meet the criteria for a 2 STAR rating.
 - Tier 2: Baseline BPR score of 40-79 points

- In Tier 2, the Director/Provider will receive technical assistance, and teaching staff may be included.
 - Tier 2 Directors/Providers will receive a minimum of two visits per month totaling 4 hours.
 - If teaching staff are to be included in this tier of Enhancement, Alabama Quality STARS Specialists will work with the Director/Provider to determine which classroom-level BPR practices are expected from teaching staff. Classroom visit frequency will be determined based on these results.
 - Classrooms with 1-5 class-level expectations will receive a minimum of 2 hours of in-person support per month.
 - Alabama Quality STARS Specialists will work with the Director/Provider to develop an action plan to meet the criteria for a 3 STAR rating.
- Enhancement Focus: CLASS
 - Tier 1:
 - Classrooms with the following criteria will be included in Tier 1:
 - Infant/Toddler: aggregate of 10-24 points or a Negative Climate score of 3-7
 - Pre-K: aggregate of 10-19 points or a Negative Climate score of 3-7
 - Tier 1 classrooms will receive a minimum of 6 hours of support per month, consisting of at least three face-to-face classroom visits.
 - Tier 2:
 - Classrooms with the following criteria will be included in Tier 2:
 - Infant/Toddler: aggregate of 25-39 points
 - Pre-K: aggregate of 20-29 points
 - Tier 2 classrooms will receive a minimum of 4 hours of support per month, consisting of two face-to-face classroom visits.
 - Tier 3:
 - Classrooms with the following criteria will be included in Tier 3:
 - Infant/Toddler: aggregate of 40-54 points
 - Pre-K: aggregate of 30-44 points
 - Tier 3 classrooms will receive a minimum of 2 hours of support per month, consisting of one face-to-face classroom visit.
 - Tier 4:
 - Classrooms with the following criteria will be included in Tier 4:
 - Infant/Toddler: aggregate of 55 points or higher
 - Pre-K: aggregate of 45 points or higher
 - Tier 4 classrooms will receive a minimum of 1 hour of support per month, consisting of one face-to-face classroom visit and remote support as needed.

18.00 APPENDICES

(Click on section heading to return to Table of Contents)

18.01 Scoring Calculator Model Example

(Click on title of this appendix portion to return to the section it belongs with.)

A STAR rating is assigned based on scoring requirements on the BPR and CLASS. To earn a STAR rating, the minimum requirement must be met in both the BPR Points and CLASS Score Points.

STAR Rating Scoring Chart

	2 STAR	3 STAR	4 STAR	5 STAR
Total Minimum BPR Points (130 possible)	40 points	80 points	95 points	110 points
Total Minimum CLASS Score Points (70 possible)	N/A	30 points	40 points	50 points

For example, if a program scores 100 points on the Best Practice Rubric and 35 points on CLASS score points, the program would meet the minimum requirements for STAR 3.

18.02 Sample CLASS Scoring Process

Program CLASS Totals	
Name of Program: Sunnyville Early Learning Center	

Infant CLASS Totals	4.83
Toddler CLASS Totals	4.88
Pre-K CLASS Totals	4.50

Total CLASS Aggregate	4.7
Program CLASS Score Points	47

Infant CLASS Observations

Classroom 1				
Name: Tadpoles				
Teacher(s): Smith/Washington				
Date: 3/1/22				
Classroom 2				
Name: Ducklings				
Teacher(s): Driver/Thompson				
Date: 3/1/22				
Classroom 3				
Name: Caterpillars				
Teacher(s): Eames/Bright				
Date: 3/2/22				

Dimension	Classroom 1 Score	Classroom 2 Score	Classroom 3 Score	Dimension Average
Cycle 1				
Relational Climate	6	5	6	5.67
Teacher Sensitivity	5	4	7	5.33
Facilitated Exploration	4	3	5	4.00
Early Language Support	4	3	6	4.33
Total				4.83

Cycle 2				
Relational Climate	7	5	7	6.33
Teacher Sensitivity	6	4	6	5.33
Facilitated Exploration	5	4	5	4.67
Early Language Support	4	3	5	4.00
Total				5.08

Cycle 3				
Relational Climate	6	6	6	6.00
Teacher Sensitivity	5	4	6	5.00
Facilitated Exploration	4	3	5	4.00
Early Language Support	5	4	5	4.67
Total				4.92

Cycle 4				
Relational Climate	5	5	5	5.00
Teacher Sensitivity	5	4	6	5.00
Facilitated Exploration	4	3	6	4.33
Early Language Support	3	3	5	3.67
Total				4.50

Infant Aggregate Score				4.83
------------------------	--	--	--	------

Toddler CLASS Observations

Classroom 1				
Name: Kittens				
Teacher(s): Young/Franklin				
Date: 3/2/22				
Classroom 2				
Name: Puppies				
Teacher(s): Preston/Knight				
Date: 3/2/22				

Dimension	Classroom 1 Score	Classroom 2 Score	Dimension Average
Cycle 1			
Positive Climate	7	5	6.00
Teacher Sensitivity	7	6	6.50
Regard for Child Perspectives	6	5	5.50
Behavior Guidance	6	4	5.00
Facilitation of Learning & Development	5	4	4.50
Quality of Feedback	6	4	5.00
Language Modeling	5	4	4.50
Total			5.29

Cycle 2			
Positive Climate	7	6	6.50
Teacher Sensitivity	6	5	5.50
Regard for Child Perspectives	5	5	5.00
Behavior Guidance	5	3	4.00
Facilitation of Learning & Development	5	4	4.50
Quality of Feedback	6	3	4.50
Language Modeling	4	4	4.00
Total			4.86

Cycle 3			
Positive Climate	7	5	6.00
Teacher Sensitivity	7	5	6.00
Regard for Child Perspectives	5	4	4.50
Behavior Guidance	6	3	4.50
Facilitation of Learning & Development	5	3	4.00
Quality of Feedback	5	3	4.00
Language Modeling	4	3	3.50
Total			4.64

Cycle 4			
Positive Climate	6	5	5.50
Teacher Sensitivity	6	4	5.00
Regard for Child Perspectives	7	5	6.00
Behavior Guidance	6	4	5.00
Facilitation of Learning & Development	5	3	4.00
Quality of Feedback	5	2	3.50
Language Modeling	5	3	4.00
Total			4.71

Toddler Aggregate Score			4.88
-------------------------	--	--	------

Pre-K CLASS Observations

Classroom 1				
Name: Cubs				
Teacher(s): Hunt/Richards				
Date: 3/3/22				

Dimension	Classroom 1 Score	Dimension Average
Cycle 1		
Positive Climate	6	6.00
Teacher Sensitivity	5	5.00
Regard for Student Perspectives	5	5.00
Behavior Management	6	6.00
Productivity	5	5.00
Instructional Learning Formats	4	4.00
Concept Development	2	2.00
Quality of Feedback	2	2.00
Language Modeling	3	3.00
Total		4.22

Cycle 2		
Positive Climate	7	7.00
Teacher Sensitivity	6	6.00
Regard for Student Perspectives	6	6.00
Behavior Management	5	5.00
Productivity	5	5.00
Instructional Learning Formats	5	5.00
Concept Development	2	2.00
Quality of Feedback	3	3.00
Language Modeling	4	4.00
Total		4.78

Cycle 3		
Positive Climate	6	6.00
Teacher Sensitivity	5	5.00
Regard for Student Perspectives	6	6.00
Behavior Management	6	6.00
Productivity	6	6.00
Instructional Learning Formats	5	5.00
Concept Development	1	1.00
Quality of Feedback	2	2.00
Language Modeling	3	3.00
Total		4.44

Cycle 4		
Positive Climate	7	7.00
Teacher Sensitivity	5	5.00
Regard for Student Perspectives	5	5.00
Behavior Management	6	6.00
Productivity	6	6.00
Instructional Learning Formats	4	4.00
Concept Development	2	2.00
Quality of Feedback	3	3.00
Language Modeling	3	3.00
Total		4.56

Pre-K Aggregate Score		4.50
-----------------------	--	------