



# EARLY LEARNING FAQs

## HIGH QUALITY

### WHAT DOES “HIGH-QUALITY” MEAN?

There is a big difference between babysitting and high-quality early learning programs. High-quality programs actively engage parents and provide a safe, healthy, learning environment for children, led by trained professionals. Through planned, age-appropriate activities, high-quality programs help young children develop social, emotional, cognitive and physical skills that are the foundation for future success.

### WHY DOES HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING MATTER?

From years of research and practice, we know a child’s brain develops more rapidly in the first five years of life than in any other time in one’s life. So, the quality of care a young child receives in their early years significantly influences their long-term growth and development. High-quality early learning opportunities build the brain and keep it developing.

### HOW DO YOU MEASURE HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMS?

In Indiana, to rate programs we use a voluntary child quality rating system, which is known as Paths to QUALITY™. This system consists of four levels, and each level builds on the foundation of the previous one. They are:

- Level 1: Basic health and safety needs of children met
- Level 2: Environment supports children’s learning
- Level 3: Planned curriculum guides child development and school readiness
- Level 4: National accreditation (the highest indicator of quality) is achieved

Of all known early education programs in Indiana only 24% have a high-quality rating.

### HOW MANY IN HOOSIER CHILDREN ARE CURRENTLY IN HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS?

Out of the more than 500,000 Hoosiers age 5 and under, only about 64,000 are enrolled in high-quality programs. This is because there are too few high-quality seats available in communities across the state and those high-quality seats often come at a cost that is out-of-reach for many working families.

### ARE ALL CHILD CARE FACILITIES LICENSED BY THE STATE?

No, the state only requires licenses for child care centers that operate full-day programs or home-based child care that have more than six unrelated children. Ministries and smaller home-based settings are not required to be licensed by the state to operate, but they may choose to do so.

INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT WAS RETRIEVED FROM THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:

Brighter Futures Indiana. Retrieved from <https://brighterfuturesindiana.org>

Early Learning Advisory Committee. Retrieved from <https://elacindiana.org>

James Heckman. (2018). The Heckman Equation. Retrieved from <https://heckmanequation.org>

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