

A Comparison of International Child Care and US Child Care Using the NACCRRA Child Care Benchmarks

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to compare several countries and the United States on the NACCRRA (National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies) Child Care Benchmarks. The use of these benchmarks has been very useful in comparing states on an agreed upon series of child care benchmarks that have a great deal of support in the research literature (AAP/APHA, 1992, 1995; Aronson, Fiene, & Douglas, 1977; Fiene 1981, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1992, 1994, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2010; Kontos & Fiene, 1986, 1987; Fiene & McDonald, 1987; Griffin & Fiene, 1995; Fiene & Kroh, 2002; Kuhns & Fiene, 1995; Morgan, Stevenson, Fiene, & Stephens, 1986). This paper will expand this comparison to begin applying these benchmarks to other countries that have been compared to the USA in the past on science and math achievement.

The child care benchmarks are the following: prevention of child abuse, immunizations, staff child ratio, group size, staff qualifications and training, supervision/discipline, fire drills, medication administration, emergency plan/contact, outdoor playground, inaccessibility of toxic substances, and proper hand washing/diapering (Fiene, 2002, 2003). These benchmarks are more based upon the structural aspects of quality rather than on the process aspects of quality. I think this is an important distinction that becomes important in the explanation of results later in this paper.

Method

Scoring was done on a 100 point scale which is delineated in Appendix A as developed by the NACCRRA Research Team. The same scoring protocol that was utilized in developing the 2007, 2009, and 2011 comparisons of states by NACCRRA was employed in this study.

Results

The results from this study and analysis were totally unexpected. The results indicated no statistically significant differences between the USA and the other countries (Australia, Belgium, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Ireland, United Kingdom, Italy, France, New Zealand, Mexico, Greece, Canada, Austria, Portugal, Philippines, Turkey, Pakistan,

Nigeria, Denmark, and Spain) studied when comparing the total scores. However, a very different scenario occurs when looking at the individual child care benchmarks. The 20 countries selected in this study scored statistically higher on the following child care benchmarks: staff-child ratio ($t = -2.153$; $p < .04$), director ($t = -5.787$; $p < .0001$) and teacher ($t = -7.661$; $p < .0001$) qualifications. The USA scored statistically higher on the following child care benchmarks: health/safety ($t = 6.170$; $p < .0001$), staff clearances ($t = 3.204$; $p < .002$), and pre-service ($t = 5.162$; $p < .0001$) /in-service training ($t = 4.217$; $p < .0001$) (See Figure 1).

The results showed that both the USA and all other countries mean scores were 58 and 56 respectively on the 100 point scale. This is not a particularly good score if you think in terms of exams, but for states and countries with vastly complex bureaucracies maybe this isn't as bad as it looks. Could it be that the USA is better than we think or is it that the USA and all other countries are providing just mediocre child care?!

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to extend the NACCRRA Child Care Benchmarks to an international comparison. As has been done by the National Science Foundation with math and science testing, these same types of comparisons have been made with the USA not fairing all that well.

It appears that when it comes to Child Care Benchmarks the USA actually appears to be in better shape than many advocates and experts would have thought when compared to other countries or is it that the other countries are providing the same form of mediocre care as it relates to these child care benchmarks. Remember that these benchmarks are heavily weighted towards the structural side of quality rather than the process side of quality.

However, when the individual benchmarks are analyzed then certain patterns occur which seem very consistent with the previous research literature. The 20 countries scored higher on the staffing benchmarks while the USA scored higher on the training and health/safety benchmarks. Clearly this is an indication reflecting public policy in foreign countries as versus the USA.

So what does this tell us. I think it is a warning call as has been put forth by NACCRRA that we still have a lot of additional work to do in improving child care, not only in the USA, but worldwide. Just as the NACCRRA Report Cards (2007, 2009, 2011) have played a role in making positive change in the child care benchmarks over time; we need to expand this reporting and change to a world wide focus. I hope that this comparison is the first step in making that happen.

For additional information:

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Notes:

The following individuals played key data collection roles in the compilation of this study: Melissa Cave, Ashley Le, Breanna Green, Corrie Podschlne, Sherrie Laporta, Ashley Edwards, Laura Hartranft, Gissell Reyes, Janet Lazur, Kayma Freeman, Jessica White, Karen Mapp, and Lindsay Bitler.

Appendix A

Benchmark criteria for *We Can Do Better: NACCRRA Ranking of State Child Care Center Regulations:2011 Update* were developed by NACCRRA and have been used for the 2007, 2009 and 2011 *We Can Do Better* reports. The rationale for each standard, including research evidence of its importance in quality care, is noted in each section of the report and in previous reports. Each of the 10 regulation benchmarks were scored with a value ranging from one to 10 points, depending on how closely the state met the benchmark, for a maximum total of 100 points. In cases where states permit several different options for complying (e.g., complying with director or teacher qualifications), the minimum allowed was used. This information was used to generate state sheets with scores for each standard.

Scoring Methods for NACCRRA Ranking of State Child Care Center Regulations (R)							
Question				Scoring method			
Regulation 1. Staff:child ratio requirements comply with NAEYC accreditation standards.				Number of ratios in compliance with NAEYC standards		Score	
				7 ratios		10	
				6 ratios		9	
				5 ratios		8	
				4 ratios		7	
				3 ratios		5	
				2 ratios		3	
				1 ratios		1	
6	9	18	27	3	4	5	
m	m	m	m	yr	yr	yr	
o	o	o	o				
1:	1:	1:	1:	1:	1:	1:1	
4	4	4	4	9	10	0	
R2. Group size requirements are in compliance with NAEYC accreditation standards.				Number of group sizes in compliance with NAEYC standards		Score	
				7 ratios		10	
				6 ratios		9	
				5 ratios		8	
				4 ratios		7	
				3 ratios		5	
				2 ratios		3	
				1 ratios		1	
6	9	18	27	3	4	5	
mo	m	m	m	y	yr	yr	
o	o	o	o	r			
8	8	8	8	1	20	20	
8	8	8	8	8			
R3. Center directors are required to have a bachelor's degree of higher in early childhood education or a related field.				Director education requirement		Score	
				Bachelor's degree in any field		10	
				College directors certification		7	
				Any associate degree		5	
				CDA		5	
				Clock hours/less than associate degree		2	
High school or less		0					

**Scoring Methods for NACCRRR Ranking of
State Child Care Center Regulations (R)**

Question	Scoring method	
R4. Lead teachers are required to have a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or an associate degree in early childhood education or related field.	Lead teacher education requirement	Score
	CDA/associate degree or better	10
	State Credential	5
	Clock Hours in ECE	2
	High School/GED	2
	Less than High School	0
R5. Lead teachers are required to have initial training, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation. • Fire safety. • Other health and safety issues. • At least one staff member certified in first aid must be present when children are in care. • At least one staff member who is certified in CPR must be present when children are in care. 	Number of areas training is required	Score
	Five areas	10
	Four areas	8
	Three areas	6
	Two areas	4
	One area	2
	None	0
	R6. Lead teachers are required to have 24 hours or more of annual training.	Ongoing training ≥
24 Hours		10
18 hours		7
12 hours		5
6 hours		2
None		0
R7. A comprehensive background check is required for child care providers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of fingerprints to check state records. • Check FBI records. • Check state child abuse registry • Check sex offender registry. • Criminal history check. 	Number of Background checks completed	Score
	Five checks	10
	Four checks	8
	Three checks	6
	Two checks	4
	One check	2
	None	0
	R8. Child care centers are required to offer program activities that address all six child development domains <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language/literacy. • Cognitive. • Social. • Emotional. • Physical. • Cultural. 	Developmental domains addressed
6 domains		10
5 domains		9
4 domains		7
3 domains		5
2 domains		3
1 domain		1
None		0

**Scoring Methods for NACCRRR Ranking of
State Child Care Center Regulations (R)**

Question	Scoring method																												
<p>R9. Child care centers are required to follow 10 recommended health and safety practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immunizations. • Guidance/discipline. • Diapering and handwashing. • Fire drills. • Medication administration. • SIDS prevention. • Emergency preparedness. • Playground surfaces. • Hazardous materials. • Incidence reporting. 	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Standards addressed</th> <th>Score</th> <th>Standards addressed</th> <th>Score</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>10</td> <td>10</td> <td>5</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9</td> <td>9</td> <td>4</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>8</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>7</td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6</td> <td>6</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">Allowing corporal punishment is an automatic zero</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Standards addressed	Score	Standards addressed	Score	10	10	5	5	9	9	4	4	8	8	3	3	7	7	2	2	6	6	1	1	Allowing corporal punishment is an automatic zero			
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8	8	3	3																										
7	7	2	2																										
6	6	1	1																										
Allowing corporal punishment is an automatic zero																													
<p>R10. Child care centers are required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage parent involvement. • Require daily or ongoing communication with parents. • Allow parental access any time their children are in care. 	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Number of items required</th> <th>Score</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Three items</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Two items</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>One item</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>None</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Number of items required	Score	Three items	10	Two items	7	One item	3	None	0																		
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Three items	10																												
Two items	7																												
One item	3																												
None	0																												

Figure 1

