

## Brief Early Childhood Quality Inventory (BEQI): Together in Practice Feedback and Goalsetting with Childcare Educators

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### Overview

- Use of evidence-based practices in out of home childcare settings can promote healthy development in young children.
- Using the **Brief Early Childhood Quality Inventory (BEQI)**, a checklist of evidence-based practices, we designed and tested **Together in Practice**, a virtual, text-based system to promote goal setting for evidence-based practices in family childcare using a randomized design.
- Educators who received feedback from a virtual BEQI observation followed by the Together in Practice system over the course of 12 weeks improved their use of evidence-based practices significantly more than educators who only received feedback. Ninety-one percent of educators who used Together in Practice improved their quality practices.
- Educators had positive impressions of BEQI: Together in Practice, with more than 70% indicating that it had a positive impact on children in their care and that they would recommend it to other early childhood educators.
- **Results indicate that a virtual intervention to observe childcare practices followed by virtual goal-setting and text messaging, can support early childhood educators improve their use of evidence-based practices.**

### Background

- Many childcare settings are not consistently using evidence-based practices, which in turn can have negative impacts on child development.
- Rates of quality rating systems participation are low, especially among family childcare and early childhood educators of diverse backgrounds. While some educators have access to a coach, coaching programs can be difficult to scale, and some educators are more engaged with coaches than others.
- At the state or community level, little information is available on the quality of childcare settings– including the types of activities that are taking place in childcare settings; how educators are feeling on a day-to-day level; and where they could use additional support.

***The goal of our study was to test the use of the BEQI: Together in Practice system in changing behaviors of childcare educators to adopt more evidence-based practices.***



## Research Objective

We were interested in testing whether providing educators with feedback and encouraging focus on specific goals for use of evidence-based practices leads to adoption of these practices. We were also interested in testing ways to encourage educators to reflect and report weekly on quality practices through responding to text messages.

## Sample

A total of 46 female childcare professionals enrolled in the study: 23 in the control group and 23 in the treatment group. This included 18 childcare center educators (1 unlicensed; 17 licensed) and 28 family childcare home educators (1 unlicensed; 27 licensed). The sample represented different communities: 15 urban; 15 small town; 11 rural; 5 suburbs.

Forty-six educators completed an initial BEQI educator questionnaire and BEQI observation. At endline, we had no attrition in the treatment group vs. 7 of 23 who dropped out of the control group.

## Methodology

Educators were recruited statewide including rural areas through childcare networks in Nebraska. Once an educator signaled interest, they consented and were enrolled in study and asked to complete an initial needs assessment survey.

Educators were compensated \$50 for completing the initial questionnaire and observation, and \$50 for endline observations. Educators who completed the intervention received an additional \$50 for participating in the text message program.

We used the following tools:

1. **BEQI educator questionnaire** Once educators were enrolled and consented, they completed an online BEQI educator questionnaire to capture background information, their perceived degree of

efficacy, knowledge of evidence-based practices, and perceptions of strengths and areas for improvement.

2. **BEQI observation:** A 90-minute virtual program observation was performed by reliable observers for all educators. The educators' practices and classroom environment were observed and scored using the BEQI observation tool.

## Intervention

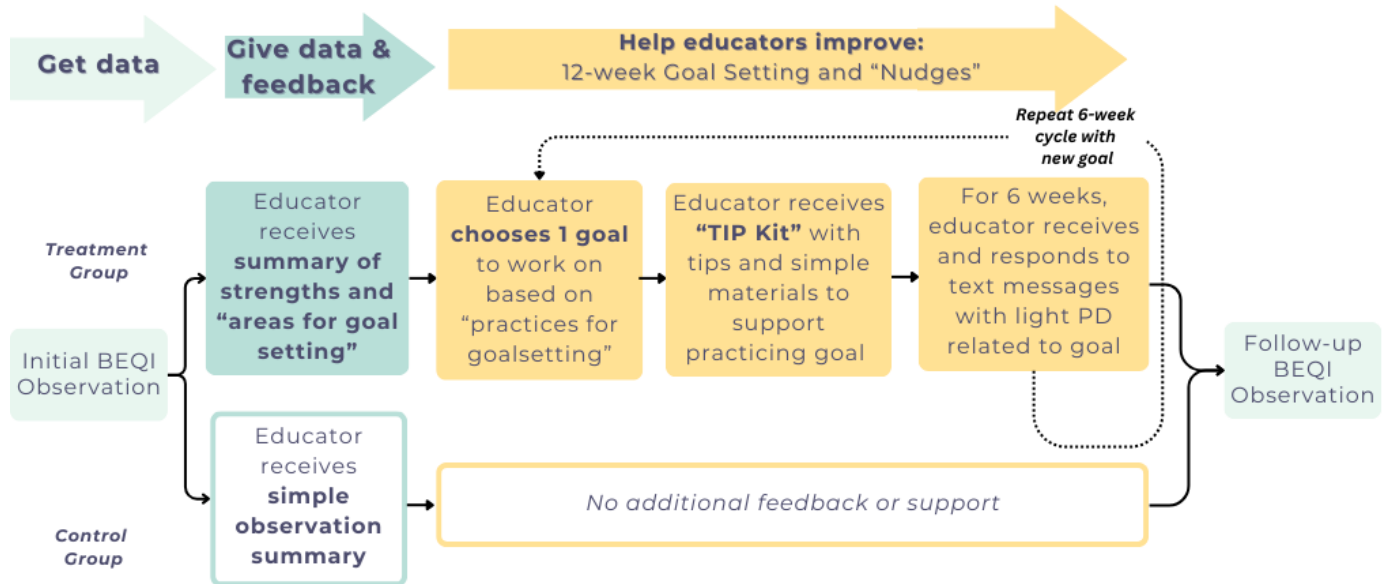
We designed and tested a virtual, text-based system, "BEQI: Together in Practice," designed to promote goal setting for evidence-based practices in childcare settings.

Evidence-based practices included:

- *Children reading books on their own*
- *Educator reading story books to children*
- *Talking with children about emotions*
- *Working one-on-one with children*
- *Connecting activities to children's lives*
- *Integrating math concepts*
- *Integrating literacy concepts*
- *Integrating science concepts*

As displayed on the next page, educators in the treatment group who participated in the BEQI: Together in Practice system, received feedback on their observation, with emphasis on positive results, referred to as "strengths". We provided feedback on twice the number of strengths, compared to practices they were not observed doing, referred to as "areas for improvement", with the intended effect to affirm strengths. Based on the short list of areas for improvement, educators were then asked to select a goal (i.e. a specific practice) to work on. Over the next 6 weeks, educators received text messages and a kit with materials that included ideas and suggestions to achieve their goals. They were also asked to report weekly on their goals, to encourage reflection and support. After six weeks, educators selected a second goal and received another six weeks of support.

## BEQI Intervention Summary

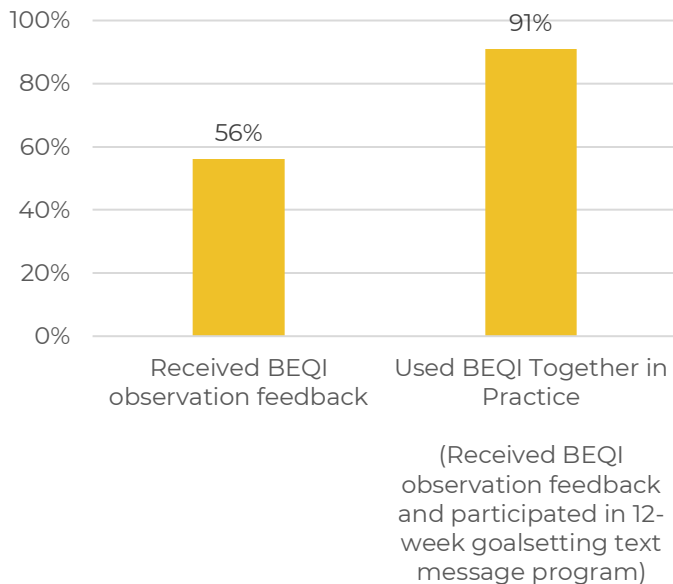


### Results

#### BEQI: Together in Practice leads to more quality practices (Figure 1).

- 91% of educators who received feedback and participated in the Together in Practice goalsetting text message program improved their evidence-based practices.
- 56% of educators who received feedback alone improved their evidence-based practices. In other words, even receiving some feedback from BEQI can lead to improved quality.

Figure 1: Educators' increase in evidence-based practices



#### Educators were happy with the BEQI:

**Together In Practice system.** Of educators participating in the intervention:

- 96% thought it was helpful to receive immediate and strengths-based observation feedback.
- 91% thought it was helpful to reflect weekly on their practices
- 73% would recommend the BEQI: TIP system to other educators.
- 70% believed it was beneficial for the children in their program.

#### Recommendations

- Our virtual BEQI: Together in Practice system to give feedback and set goals can facilitate improving evidence-based practices.
- Using a 90-min BEQI virtual observation, followed by largely positive feedback and check-ins over text messaging through the Together in Practice system, led to a greater improvement in quality practices than providing feedback alone.
- Community childcare networks, states and other organizations focused on improving childcare practices can use the BEQI: Together in Practice system to gain insight into a focused set of activities and behaviors in childcare settings, and to help promote behavior change.

## FAQ

### *What is BEQI?*

The BEQI observation educator questionnaire tools give insight into use of evidence-based practices in childcare. Observations can be conducted virtually or live. Data is collected via an app and aggregated at the community level to identify areas for improvement.

### *How is BEQI different than other measurement and improvement tools?*

- The BEQI observational tool is streamlined and easy-to-use. The observation tool is scored using a yes/no scale and is easy-to-train on and easy-to-interpret. The tool requires less training than traditional quality measurement tools. 96% of observers who complete BEQI training become reliable.
- The BEQI tool is adaptable and can be modified to fit the needs of the organization or community. It is applicable across different setting types. To date, BEQI has been used in the US, Colombia, Liberia, Guinea Bissau, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, The Gambia, Zambia, Portugal, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Kyrgyzstan, Egypt, and Denmark.
- Other tools have been focused primarily on research rather than for use as a monitoring tool. BEQI is designed to be used for monitoring over time.
- The BEQI focuses on specific evidence-based behaviors and practices
- The BEQI observation tool has flexible uses and can be used for program evaluation without a coaching component, or it can be combined with the Together in Practice text-message based goalsetting/virtual coaching system (see more below)

### *How does BEQI: Together-in Practice support educators?*

- BEQI: Together in Practice is a strengths-based system that focuses first on what an educator is doing well based on results from the BEQI

observation tool, then offers feedback for addressing areas of improvement.

- BEQI: Together in Practice provides immediate feedback to teachers through SMS texts or WhatsApp messages, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement
- BEQI: Together in Practices includes virtual coaching/text message-based system designed to promote goalsetting and support the use of evidence-based practices.

### *What does BEQI cover?*

BEQI covers different areas of evidence-based practices and characteristics for childcare settings for preschool-aged children, toddlers, and infants:

<b>Play-based learning</b>	How does the educator engage with children in play-based learning activities and materials?
<b>Learning through conversations</b>	How does the educator facilitate children's learning through extending conversation and dialogue?
<b>Promoting strong relationships</b>	How does the educator interact with children to foster social and emotional development?
<b>Safe and stimulating environments</b>	How is the learning space arranged and what are the health and safety features of the environment?
<b>Engaging families</b>	How does the program form relationships with parents and families?
<b>Educator perceptions</b>	How does the educator feel about his/her work, sources of stress and joy, and support available?

### *Who is ECD Measure?*

We are a team of early childhood experts committed to building better lives for young children around the world through data. We support professionals, governments, non-profit organizations and researchers with tools, resources and connections to use data towards quality early childhood care and education for all children.