

Raise program to stellar status
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As new leaders of statewide organizations dedicated to increasing the quality of care and education for children from the prenatal period to age 8, we found it refreshing to see Ron Haskins' and Steve Barnett's Oct. 13 viewpoint, "Scrutiny for Head Start."

While the national program holds immeasurable promise, it is not fully meeting its potential to serve the great needs of children in poverty. Evaluation has determined that not all Head Start programs provide children with basic tools for the future. Their failure to do so has a consequence -- for children, parents, the next generation of workers and our communities.

Quality matters and President Barack Obama espouses accountability. He supports the reassessment of underperforming programs and endorses use of a rating instrument to evaluate performance, similar to the quality rating and improvement systems in place for early care and learning programs in nearly 30 states.

In New York, we are working to fully implement a QUALITYstarsNY rating system, now being field-tested in 13 communities. Such a system looks to support providers as they work to raise standard of care. Every parent wants the highest quality care for his or her child and we must ensure that access.

We hope that QUALITYstarsNY will stimulate efforts that will focus on program standards, early childhood workforce development and consumer education.

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