Redefining Quality to Center the Capabilities of Young Children

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> We have standards we have to meet. We've got to get them ready. Kindergarten nowadays is structured. Very, very, very structured. (Teacher Interview)
>
> I think teachers are afraid that if they let kids go, then they're going to have an increase of behavioral problems … You see in all the rooms. It's very tightly managed … because I'm like that. I mean, if I'm a leader that's like that, more than likely my teachers are going to be like that. (Leader Interview)

These two quotes speak to a common and troubling theme when it comes to measuring quality in early childhood: top-down control of children and educators. We became acutely aware of the tendency toward control when we implemented our Dynamic Innovation for Young Children (DIFYC) professional development, in which the teacher and leader quoted were participants. DIFYC was launched as part of a long-term partnership between one district and an institute of higher education. The partnership was centered on a common goal of enhancing agency for young children. When we asked the early childhood teachers and leaders in DIFYC to identify barriers to agentic experiences for young children, they described a culture of surveillance in their schools and programs. This surveillance culture existed in large part because "high-quality early childhood" had come to mean highly controlled environments that were dictated by externally imposed standards.

This conflation of *quality* with *control* is not new to early childhood, but has amplified in the years following President Barack Obama's early learning initiative. Launched in 2013, this initiative incentivized states to improve the quality of early care and education programs by developing standardized measurements of quality that would hold early childhood leaders and teachers accountable for improving the learning environments and achievement of young children (Jeon et al., 2014; Reinking, 2015). Many states developed Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) to establish definitions of "quality" and determine metrics and procedures to support early care and education providers with enhancing their quality (Meek et al., 2022; Reinking, 2015). State-level educational policymakers decide what quality means, and early childhood providers must enact practices that fit these standards as evaluated through observation tools and achievement data (Ishimine & Tayler, 2014; Weiland & Rosada, 2022).

In our work with the DIFYC participants, we found that such high-stakes, evaluative approaches to measuring quality placed increased pressure on early childhood teachers and leaders. Participants reported experiencing burnout, strained relations between leaders and teachers, and classrooms where children are frequently managed and controlled because educators and children are constantly watched, evaluated, documented, and recorded. As the leader quoted above indicates, this culture of surveillance often starts with early childhood leaders, as they are the ones who set the culture for the program. When leaders are pressured to meet external measures of quality, they may start to control teachers (Cook, 2014; Oliveras-Ortiz, 2015), who then control their children. Early care and education providers are controlled through limits placed on their autonomy and regular evaluative observation of their practice (Schaak et al., 2020; Smith & Lawrence, 2019; Wells, 2015). Young children are controlled through limits placed on how they move, communicate, play, and learn (Park et al., 2021; Kim, 2016; Madrid & Dunn-Kenney, 2010).

Reinke and colleagues (2019) explain that measuring quality in positivistic, top-down ways advances "the hegemonies of standardization" (p. 192), where those in power use prescriptive, pseudo-objective "tactics of regulation and surveillance as a means of ensuring conformity" (p. 193). Along similar lines, Dahlberg and colleagues (2013) say that "'Quality' is a concept that is neither neutral nor natural. Rather, it is a constructed concept, inscribed with assumptions and values that make it a powerful tool for normalization and control, for governing at a distance and managing performance" (p. 3). What's more, standard conceptualizations of educational quality are rooted in White Eurocentric and ableist notions of "goodness" (Beneke & Love, 2022; Souto-Manning, 2019), which do not reflect the cultural and community strengths, values, and assets of many children and educators in early childhood programs.

DIFYC was intended to counter the push toward conformity in the name of "quality." The professional development was grounded in the team's research on young children's agency, which found that quality agentic learning environments only exist when young children can show many capabilities. Through a series of workshops and one-on-one coaching, we, as members of a large multi-racial-cultural-lingual professional development team, supported early childhood teachers and leaders to transform their understanding of high-quality early childhood. Collectively, we worked to shift our gazes away from an emphasis on top-down standards that fostered cultures of control, and toward a focus on what children were already doing. As our work with the teachers and leaders unfolded, all of us came to see that a justice-centered approach to measuring and documenting quality in early childhood had to begin with young children and their capabilities.

In this essay, we describe how shifting one's gaze to observing the capabilities of young children can advance a humanizing, equitable, and socially just way of measuring quality in early childhood. Through the stories of two DIFYC participants—one teacher and one principal—we show how focusing on children's capabilities serves to counter the reductionist, hierarchical, and dehumanizing approaches promoted through QRISs and other high-stakes evaluative approaches to defining quality. We argue that approaches to measuring quality in early childhood need to be revised to center young children and their capabilities.

THE DYNAMIC INNOVATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

How DIFYC Came to Be

The DIFYC professional development was implemented in one southwestern school district. District education leaders recruited the participants, specifically targeting schools and centers that served predominantly children of color from low socioeconomic status backgrounds, and whose leaders were open to shifting early childhood practice to enhance young children's agency. We included both leaders and teachers in the professional development, as we knew that true transformation could only be possible if leaders and teachers worked together to collectively imagine what agentic practice would look like in their programs and classrooms. Each leader was asked to invite up to three teachers from their schools to participate in DIFYC. The leaders used different approaches to identify these teachers. For some, they asked the teachers of their youngest students (typically pre-K and kindergarten) if they wanted to participate. For others, they invited teachers whom the leaders felt demonstrated openness to thinking about young children's agency. Regardless of how the teachers were selected, the teachers were invited to voluntarily participate in DIFYC.

For teachers, witnessing their school leaders participate alongside them in all DIFYC sessions was an assurance that this was an opportunity to work collaboratively with their leaders on improving students' educational experiences. We did not want the teachers to see the professional development as another required top-down task. The teacher participants received full support from their school leaders to use their own agency to create classroom environments that are conducive to children's agency.

Across the two years that DIFYC took place, nine schools/centers participated. Participating educators included 14 principals/assistant principals and 40 teachers, of whom 23 taught pre-K, eight taught kindergarten, seven taught first grade, and two taught third grade. The teachers worked in general education, bilingual education, and inclusion classrooms. More than half of the educators were Latinx (n=30), with the rest being White (n=12), Black (n=5), Multiracial (n=5), or Asian (n=2). They ranged in experience from one to 20 years of teaching experience for the teachers and one to 11 years of administrative experience for the school leaders. The schools served primarily Latinx and Black children, the majority of whom qualified for free and reduced-price lunch. In terms of grade level, there were 23 pre-K teachers, eight kindergarten teachers, seven first-grade teachers, and two third-grade teachers. The classroom types that teachers worked in include general education, bilingual education, and inclusion classrooms.

What DIFYC Entailed
In the first couple of DIFYC sessions, participants spent time learning about and discussing the concept of agency. Specifically, they focused on how young children show their agency, and how racism and other systems of oppression in early childhood manifest in who is often allowed to show agency in classrooms (White middle-class children) and who is not (young children of color with lower socioeconomic status). Participants looked at a list of different ways that young children might show their agency. Based on years of research that the DIFYC principal investigator had conducted, the list documented numerous capabilities that children show when they are in agentic classrooms. These capabilities were organized into the following categories: Children influence, make decisions about, or initiate their learning experience in terms of (1) what they learn, (2) how they learn, (3) where they learn, (4) with/from whom they learn, (5) how they demonstrate learning, and (6) how they incorporate identity and community assets, values, and knowledges. The DIFYC participants reviewed and offered feedback on the list. The DIFYC project team then revised the list based on participants' feedback.

In these early sessions, the DIFYC participants also developed action plans for themselves, reflecting on one particular area of their classroom practice that they wanted to focus on throughout the year. Each participant was then assigned a DIFYC coach, all of whom were members of the higher education team. There were 11 scholars on the higher education team, including faculty, a post-doctoral fellow, and graduate students. All worked in the field of early childhood with varying expertise in special education, educational psychology, bilingual education, and social studies. The racial and ethnic makeup of the team was comprised of Black (2), Asian (2), Latina (3), and White (4).

DIFYC coaches were assigned to educators based on their expertise and backgrounds. The primary consideration was around the type of classroom context the coach would be observing in. For example, the educators who taught in bilingual classrooms were assigned bilingual coaches with expertise in bilingual education. We also considered positions of power to try and ensure that pairs felt equitable and comfortable for all. For instance, faculty members were paired with school leaders while graduate students were paired with classroom teachers. These matches were intentionally developed by the higher education team to provide contextual support to educators throughout the sessions.

The coaches conducted two site visits with each participant, once in the fall and once in the spring. Each visit involved what we called "collective observations and reflective interviews." During the observations, the coach observed in the classroom for two hours. They wrote observation notes using the list of capabilities as a guide. Coaches also took photos or videos, which served as artifacts to discuss with the educators during the reflective interview. While their coach collected these data, the teacher was tasked with paying attention to the children's capabilities as they taught, keeping in mind the DIFYC capabilities list. For school leaders, they chose an early childhood classroom in their school/program to observe alongside their coaches and took notes just as the coaches did.

All educators practiced observing classroom videos using the list of capabilities as a guide before these visits took place. The timing of the observations was at the full discretion of the classroom teachers. They had complete decision-making power over when their coaches and leaders visited their classrooms. After the two-hour observation, the DIFYC coach and participant met for an hour-long reflective interview. In this interview, the two discussed all of the capabilities the children showed, identifying places where there could be further opportunity to expand children's capabilities in the classroom. These reflective interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed.

Building trust between DIFYC coaches and participants was critical, especially given participants' wariness around classroom observations due to the climate of surveillance in early childhood. From the beginning, the coaches made it clear to the participants that the DIFYC observations were designed to focus on children and their capabilities. They were in no way evaluative of the teachers. When during the reflective interviews, participants saw that the coaches did indeed focus on the range of capabilities the children showed, this assured participants and made them less guarded. There were also many other points of connection between the coaches and participants. The coaches regularly communicated with participants over the phone or email to check in on participants' progress with their action plans and to provide resources and supports when they encountered difficulties. Coaches also engaged with their assigned participants in the same working group at every workshop session. Participants gathered their own evidence related to their action plans throughout the year by taking photos and videos of their classrooms. They would send these data to their coaches to share the exciting transformations taking place in their classrooms. Through these activities, coaches and participants built authentic, caring relationships that were rooted in the common goal of enhancing children's agency in early childhood settings.

What follows are the stories of two DIFYC participants and how their yearlong journey of focusing on children's capabilities led to transformational practices that enhanced quality as the teachers, leaders, and the children they worked with defined it. While all of our participants experienced some shift in their practice, we tell these particular stories because they represent common trends among our participants. The two narratives are told from the perspective of the coaches who worked with each participant (the first and second authors). We draw from field notes, interviews, photographs, and written reflections to help tell each story. Through these stories, we hope to demonstrate how a more humanizing, justice-centered approach to measuring quality in early childhood would better center the capabilities of young children than the evaluation of classrooms and teachers based on externally imposed standards.

PROMOTING QUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD BY FOCUSING ON CHILDREN'S CAPABILITIES

One Teacher's Journey of Transforming Practice

Megan was a second-year teacher in a pre-kindergarten classroom when she participated in DIFYC. At the beginning of DIFYC, Megan set a goal of creating a more collaborative learning environment rooted in children's inquiry. As her school espoused project-based learning, Megan believed that a high-quality early childhood classroom was one where young children worked together on emergent inquiries that became larger projects. She, however, found it difficult to see opportunities for emergent classroom projects because her attention often went to children's behaviors that felt challenging. Like all early childhood educators in the district, Megan was regularly observed for her classroom quality by external evaluators, which led to her feeling pressured to ensure her children behaved in compliant ways. Megan focused her energies on trying to manage and control children's behaviors, and could not enact the kinds of projects she had hoped to generate. She was trapped between two competing definitions of quality: quality as tied to children's compliant behavior, and quality as rooted in inquiry-based learning.

Because she was not accomplishing either metric of quality, Megan did not see her teaching practice or her classroom as being of high quality.

When Megan's DIFYC coach visited her for their fall observation and interview, the coach cited numerous ways that the children showed their capabilities. Of note to Megan was children's explorations with blocks. The coach noted:

> There were three boys who were playing inside the block area building something. Then they started to build squares with the blocks. When they used the shorter blocks, one child pointed out, "That's too short," so he brought the longer one to cover the whole block area to build a building. He said, "We need to have a bigger one, the longer one." He put it on top. I think one boy started to use that foam block. He put it up front, and then let it go and then said, "It's raining, it's raining." It became like a storm. "It's raining, it's raining a storm." They threw the blocks, the foam blocks, and were pretending it's rain. (Interview)

This type of collaborative inquiry and problem-solving to create a building with the blocks, as well as the playful reaction to the blocks falling, were behaviors that Megan did not realize children in her classroom were capable of showing. After hearing her coach share all of the capabilities that she noticed, Megan reflected back,

> As I heard you share, I felt encouraged because I feel like often, I notice more of when behaviors are not working in the classroom. To hear all of the stories that they're making, that's my hope for them. I often wonder, "When I send them to centers how productive is it?" …That those things are all there in their play is really exciting. (Interview)

After hearing her DIFYC coach share all of the capabilities she noticed in the children, Megan also began to notice more of the children's capabilities. As she paid closer attention to her children in this strengths-based way, she became more attuned to the children's interests, seeing these as important gateways to maximizing children's demonstration of their capabilities. Megan started organizing opportunities for children to engage in inquiry around their interests.

One example was the pecan mini-study that emerged from her children's exploration outdoors. During outdoor play time, some of her students picked up pecans that had fallen from a tree in the schoolyard and gathered them in a container. Megan noticed her students' interest in the pecans, so instead of letting the moment pass, she brought the nuts into the classroom. Megan and the children wanted to crack the pecans but they couldn't because the shell was too hard. She shared the children's discovery with their families. A few days later, one of the students' parents sent in a tool that could crack pecans. The children used the tool to shell the pecans and engage in deeper exploration of both the nutcracker and the nuts themselves. Children shared observations about how the nuts were cracked open and asked questions about pecans as they engaged in this inquiry. Megan also came to realize that by sharing children's inquiries with families, she invited families to connect with the life of the classroom and bring in their knowledge and assets.

Figure 1. Gathering pecans

Figure 2. Cracking nuts

Another mini-study that emerged from the children's interests was an inquiry into spiders. In the fall, Megan's DIFYC coach noticed a child using string to make spider webs. Other children started making these webs as well. Megan decided to ask her students to observe a tarantula that they found in the school. This sparked the children's interest in launching a spider study. The children engaged in a series of experiences that deepened their knowledge of spiders: they collectively created a chart displaying what they already knew about spiders, and drawing them based on this, as well as on their observation of the tarantula. They watched video clips and digital read-alouds about spiders to gain additional information. Each child then chose one of three types of spiders to focus on—tarantulas, black widows, or wolf spiders—and created detailed drawings of their selected spider type that included captions with the facts they had learned about the spider. This culminated in a group share of what each child had learned about spiders.

Figure 3. Black Widow study

Figure 4. Tarantula study

Figure 5. Wolf Spider study

When Megan's coach returned for her second visit in the spring, the coach noticed a change in how she spoke about her children. The protocol was exactly the same as in the fall, but this time around, Megan seemed to have greater awareness of what the children were doing and learning. Rather than focusing on children's challenging behaviors, Megan was focusing on their capabilities. During the reflective interview with her coach, she used the phrase, "I don't know if you saw this" several times as she shared various scenes she had observed where the children showed their numerous capabilities (Interview). There was an enthusiasm and confidence in Megan that differed from her fall visit. In her end-of-year reflection, Megan wrote,

> I was blown away by the learning [my coach] saw in my classroom. Her insights helped me to see their learning in a new way, beyond lessons and assessments but how they were authentically interacting with ideas presented, testing hypotheses, figuring out conflict etc.... this year has been a chance to not only notice students' interests but also act to provide kiddos opportunities to learn about a topic they independently identified. (End-of-Year Reflection)

It was through recognizing children's capabilities that Megan was able to enact her vision for quality instruction in her classroom. The more she saw their capabilities, the more she looked for opportunities to enhance these capabilities, building on children's interests to cultivate agentic, collaborative learning experiences. Megan was no longer hindered by fears related to children's behaviors. In fact, as she focused on children's capabilities and used these to enact projects, many of the behaviors that felt challenging to her stopped on their own. Moving away from trying to control children and instead paying attention to what they were already doing resulted in quality instruction as Megan defined it. This transformation in Megan's practice did not emerge from a top-down evaluation of Megan's teaching. All Megan's DIFYC coach did was point out the many capabilities that young children showed, and the rest followed.

One Principal's Journey of Transforming Practice

Like all of the leaders who participated in DIFYC, Zahra was interested in enhancing young children's agency, but letting go of the external measures and standards of quality that were imposed upon her program was a challenge. When she participated in DIFYC, Zahra was in her second year as a school principal. She had previously taught upper elementary and middle school for six years. At the beginning of DIFYC, Zahra shared that she had a rather top-down approach to leadership. Never having been an early childhood educator herself, Zahra relied on state standards for quality to guide her work with her teachers of young children. She and her assistant principal often walked into the early childhood classrooms with checklists and observational tools to evaluate the teachers and classrooms.

Zahra was, however, very receptive to the ideas she developed through the professional development. During her fall visit with her DIFYC coach, Zahra was enthusiastic about observing in a classroom with the aim of noticing children's capabilities—an orientation that was different from her typical observation tools. She and her coach observed in a kindergarten classroom. When reflecting on this observation during her interview, Zahra shared that two children on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) were given the freedom to move around as they wanted both during center time—which was a period of the day when children went to different centers around the room to engage in more playful activities—and during whole group instructional time. The rest of the children were expected to sit in their assigned spots and only speak when it was their turn or when a teacher asked them a question. As she looked over the DIFYC capabilities list, Zahra realized that the two children who could move around freely had the chance to demonstrate many more capabilities than the other children in the classroom.

To support her observation, Zahra described a moment when the children were in literacy centers. The teacher assigned the children to centers, where they were expected to stay for the duration of the literacy block. One of two students who were permitted to "bounce" from center to center left his

audiobook center and went to the consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) word center where children were building CVC words with letter magnets. He noticed that a peer had built a VC word. She explained,

> The child told his peer, "No, that's a VC word! That's not a CVC word!" So, then they started arguing about it: "No. It's a CVC word." "Why is it a CVC word?" And then the child took the other child back to the board and they were talking about why those were CVC words as opposed to the VC words. So, I thought that was a really, really powerful example of when they were working collaboratively. (Fall Interview)

Zahra attributed this collaborative problem-solving to the first child's sense of agency to travel around the room. Based on this observation, she wondered if giving children more freedom to move around the classroom as they chose would enhance their capabilities. As she put it,

> If we opened it up, it would allow students to explore and learn about concepts that they want to learn about at a particular time. I believe that if we do that, then the learning outcome will be far greater than if we force them to sit in a particular center that they really don't want to be in at the moment, especially if there are centers that are culturally...that they can relate to. It just provides them with a richer learning experience. Some students need to be able to explore and choose what they're learning, when they're learning. So that they're developing those social and emotional skills. That agency is critical. (Interview)

Inspired by her own realizations about young children's agency, Zahra made a plan to meet with the DIFYC teachers from her school one-on-one to discuss how they could implement the ideas that they were learning about in our DIFYC sessions. She planned to share what she was learning and to ask teachers what resources they would need to implement their own action plans. The kindergarten teacher whom Zahra observed was similarly interested in giving children the freedom to move around the classroom during literacy centers. After meeting with Zahra about this goal, she felt she had the agency to open up her classroom in this way. Prior to DIFYC, she would not have considered giving children more flexibility of movement, as order, structure, and control seemed to be expectations school leaders had of her classroom.

During Zahra's spring visit, she and her coach observed significant changes in the kindergarten classroom. Children were no longer assigned a center but could choose which center to go to. They also noticed that when children felt a center was too crowded, they would simply take the materials they needed and move to a different part of the room. Zahra noted that the children were communicating more with each other than they had earlier. The children were also no longer going to the classroom teacher as much, but rather working things out on their own. Zahra explained that the teacher was finding greater joy in the classroom as well: "She's very excited about it and she's very proud. She comes by at least four times a week to share what's happening in her class. She's just super excited" (Interview).

Reflecting on her own growth over the course of DIFYC, Zahra shared the following:

> Anybody that knows me knows that I am a very structured individual. I love communication and I love collaboration. But I'm very, very, very structured. That's just who I am as a person ... so, just being able to let go as an administrator, and say it's okay if you do these things in your classroom like have the kids go to different centers. That is something that I had to just wait and watch and see what happened. I think that's just shifted my thinking...That we don't have to be super structured and kids can still learn and they might even be, well they're learning even more. (Interview)

Zahra's ability to let go of her desire for structure and control came out of her paying attention to the capabilities of young children. Zahra realized that too much structure could actually hinder children's

capability expansion. When her focus became on enhancing capabilities for all children, she was able to work more collaboratively with her teachers, enabling them to try out DIFYC practices that resonated with them. Zahra's desire for the teachers to let go of control with their children led to her letting go of control with the teachers. Quality for Zahra was no longer defined by externally imposed standards and observation tools. Instead, quality practices were those that Zahra and the teachers developed together based on the capabilities children showed.

A CASE FOR REDEFINING QUALITY BY FOCUSING ON CHILDREN'S CAPABILITIES

What these two stories teach us is that defining and measuring quality in early childhood does not have to depend on top-down, pseudo-objective standards and evaluations. Current approaches to measuring quality tend to encourage cultures of surveillance and control that are rooted in racist, ableist, classist normalization and standardization (Beneke & Love, 2022; Kim, 2016; Madrid & Dunn-Kenney, 2010). A more justice-centered approach to measuring quality focuses on the capabilities of young children. By looking specifically for children's capabilities, educators can identify ways that they might change the environment—not the child—to further enhance and expand those capabilities. In this way, educators are able to determine what counts as quality early care and education in their specific contexts with their particular children.

We believe that shifting our understanding of quality in early childhood to an approach that centers the capabilities of young children improves the experiences of everyone involved, including teachers, children, families, coaches, and administrators. We found that focusing on the capabilities of the children also helped to lift participant DIFYC educators' own morale and their enthusiasm for their work. Leaders and teachers developed more trusting and collaborative relationships, which led to teachers also trusting their children more. Subsequently, as evident in the stories we shared, teachers, school leaders, and children all found greater joy in their work. When the educators could let go of control and make shifts that expanded children's capabilities, children's many assets, strengths, and knowledges became more evident. For Megan and Zahra, these shifts came about because of what they observed in children, not because of external measures imposed upon them.

Other DIFYC participants reported that the ability to focus on the children was in many ways freeing. Their DIFYC collective observations and reflective interviews were a radical shift from their typical experience with observers. Before participating in DIFYC, they frequently felt inundated with teacher evaluation systems and top-down pressures coming at them from district and school supervisors. In the DIFYC process, they could focus on the children's capabilities alongside their DIFYC coaches and trust that their coaches were not trying to judge or find mistakes in their practice. What followed was transformation rooted in the educators' own ideas about what high-quality early childhood looked like in their specific contexts. In this way, DIFYC allowed for a reclaiming of what Beneke and Love (2022) describe as the "wisdom of multiply-marginalized children, families, and teachers" (p. 203).

As coaches, we also had to let go of our own ideas about the kind of transformation we hoped to see in the classrooms. Although Zahra and Megan's experiences were emblematic of the types of changes we observed across all participants, not everyone made such significant shifts and a few were quite resistant to change. For example, one teacher shared in later workshops that she was resistant, even angry, in meetings at first because she did not feel a shift was necessary in her classroom. It was important that the DIFYC higher education team see value in each participant's way of seeing and expanding young children's capabilities. We did not want the educators to see DIFYC as another type of top-down professional development aimed at forcing very specific, administrator-driven changes in practice that adhered to state definitions of quality. As the DIFYC participants and coaches together practiced observing and reflecting on young children's capabilities, even the most initially resistant

educators saw that we were joining *with* teachers in reflection on environments that cultivate agency. At the same time, we learned to find value in the many ways that educators recognized children's capabilities and defined quality in their own contexts. As such, we as a team went through our own process of letting go.

While QRISs often create cultures of control, focusing on children's capabilities created cultures of freedom and joy. The DIFYC approach to measuring quality achieved the goal of improving children's educational experiences in ways that existing QRISs may not. We, therefore, call on the early childhood field to change how we think about measuring quality in early care and education. Rather than looking for educators' compliance to decontextualized, reductionist tools, look for all the ways that young children show their capabilities. Rather than controlling the objectives of teachers and leaders, give them freedom to lean on their own wisdom and define for themselves what feels like high-quality learning in their particular contexts. Rather than cultivating a culture of performance, cultivate a culture of curiosity, wonder, and experimentation, where educators get to try new things that further children's interests and expand capabilities. A model of quality measurement that centers the capabilities of children is one that we believe gives more agency to educators and children alike. This is what it means to have a justice-centered approach to measuring quality.

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