VIQI

Variations in Implementation
of Quality Interventions

Attachment A.3

Protocol for In-person Visits for Screening and Recruitment Activities and Related Materials

The VIQI project team will schedule in-person visits with Programs[1] and Centers that are interested in participating in the VIQI project and that meet preliminary eligibility requirements for study inclusion. During these meetings, the study team will explain what participation in the study would mean, answer questions, and determine interest in participating. The study team will also obtain clarification on information that was gathered during initial screening calls to further explore program and center operations in detail and to discuss plans for potential implementation of the selected interventions, including professional development, research procedures, and roles and responsibilities of programs, centers, and of the study team over the course of the VIQI project.

Documents included in this set of materials:
   A. Email Template to Request Site Visit
   B. Email Template to Schedule Follow-Up Site Visit
   C. Protocol for In-person visits for Screening and Recruitment
      a. Sample Agenda
      b. Potential Discussion Topics for Site Visits
   D. Site Visit Powerpoint
   E. Email Templates to Communicate Random Assignment Results (PILOT)
   F. Email Templates to Communicate Random Assignment Results (FULL-SCALE)

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[1] "Program" refers to an administrative entity that is affiliated with, operates or oversees one or more centers. A program may be a Head Start grantee or delegate agency or a community-based organization or business that operates one or more child care centers. "Center" is a Head Start or community-based facility that houses Head Start or child care classrooms.

Email Template to Request Site Visit

Email subject line: Following Up Re Important National Early Childhood Project

Dear _____:

I am writing to follow up on our conversation on [INSERT DATE] regarding VIQI (Variations in Implementation of Quality Interventions: Examining the Quality-Child Outcomes Relationship in Child Care and Early Education) – an important new project of the US Department of Health and Human Services. Thank you again for taking the time out of your busy schedule to speak with our study team!

We are excited to inform you that the team has reviewed the information you provided and determined that your organization meets the preliminary eligibility requirements. Based on what we know so far, we think [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] could be a good fit for the VIQI project!

As a next step, we would like to visit your organization in person to share more information about this important project, learn more about your early care and education program, and answer any questions you might have. We would like an opportunity to meet with you, [insert names and titles or appropriate leadership] and anyone else who should be involved in making a decision to participate in this project.

I will follow up with you by phone in the next week to discuss potential times for a visit. I am resending a brief overview of our project. I am also attaching a brief summary of the information you gave us during our initial phone call. Would you please review this information before our visit and confirm if it is correct?

Please let me know if you have any questions. We look forward to talking with you again soon!

Thank you.

Best,

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Email Template for Follow-Up Site Visit

Email subject line: Scheduling a Follow-Up Visit Re VIQI Project

Dear _____:

I am writing to follow up our meeting on [INSERT DATE] regarding VIQI (Variations in Implementation of Quality Interventions: Examining the Quality-Child Outcomes Relationship in Child Care and Early Education) – a project of the US Department of Health and Human Services.

We are excited to inform you that we think [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] could be a good fit for the VIQI project! As we discussed, we would like to schedule a follow-up meeting with you, [insert names and/or titles of appropriate leadership, **including key center leadership/staff**] to continue learning about your organization and the centers you operate, and to discuss potential plans for working together.

I will follow up with you by phone/email to discuss potential times for a visit. In the meantime, please let me know if you have any questions or additions. We look forward to moving forward and to talking with you again soon.

Thanks very much.

Best,

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Protocol for In-person Visits for Screening and Recruitment

Sample Agenda for Site Visits

Team members will begin by welcoming participants and presenting a PowerPoint describing key details of the study, including goals, timeline and benefits/responsibilities of participation. Team members will then facilitate a discussion to probe key eligibility criteria at the center and classroom levels (see discussion topics listed below) and determine program interest and eligibility.

Sample language for opening/welcome

Thank you for taking the time to meet with our team. Based on what we know so far, we think [INSERT NAME OF PROGRAM/CENTER] could be a good fit for the VIQI Project. We will be using today's meeting to provide more information about the VIQI Project, answer your questions and learn more about your organization. We expect this meeting to take [X] hours. Participation is voluntary, and responses will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

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Sample agenda items (Facilitators will customize for each meeting)

1. Introductions

2. Review presentation slides and respond to initial questions

   - Project overview and timeline

   - Study goals and design

   - Benefits of participation

   - Roles and responsibilities

3. Follow up with outstanding program and center-level questions that were not covered during Screening Calls (**See Screening Protocol for Phone Calls, Attachment A.2**).

4. Discuss key program, center and classroom information and discuss plans for implementation (**See Potential Discussion Topics for Site Visits**)

5. Wrap-up: Questions, timetable and next steps

Potential Discussion Topics for Site Visits

The VIQI team will use this list of potential discussion topics during site visits to gather information about key eligibility criteria at the program, center, and classroom levels. Facilitators may edit topics discussed and questions asked as needed to continue gathering information that was not already covered in initial phone meetings and to delve more deeply into details at the center/classroom level. Additional questions and prompts (not included in this document) may be asked as non-standardized follow-up and to clarify responses provided by informants.

Participants in first-round visits may include board members, policy council members (for Head Start programs), center administrators, and other appropriate administrative staff.

In most cases, the team will also need to make a second-round visit to continue to gather information about individual centers and to develop plans for implementation of the intervention components, including coaching and training of teachers. This second visit will also provide an opportunity to meet with as many center-level staff as possible to explain the study, answer questions about participation and build buy-in. To the extent possible, we will try to leverage geographical clustering of programs and to meet with key program and center staff in centralized locations for cost efficiencies.

Program–Level Topics *(For grantee/delegate agencies or organizations that operate multiple child care centers, and independent child care centers[2])*

- **Discuss outstanding Program-level questions that were not covered during Screening Calls (See Screening Protocol for Phone Calls, Attachment A.2).**

- **Discuss management information systems (MIS) and data sources that could be used to understand initial levels of quality across centers operated by the Program:**
    - What child-level information is tracked (individual characteristics, family characteristics, attendance, assessment information, etc.)? Quality of the data sources? Would it be accessible by project staff?
    - Do programs feed into a central data system or is there an individual system at the program level?

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[2] In this document, we refer to Head Start grantees, delegate agencies, organizations that operate multiple child care centers, and independent centers as "Programs."

- **Discuss plans related to the implementation of curricular enhancements including coaching and training:**
    o Plans for implementation of VIQI coaching model
    o Plans for implementation of VIQI training for teachers
    o Qualifications of coaches
    o Recruitment, hiring, and training of coaches
    o Technology required for implementation of intervention
    o Potential barriers to implementing these plans

- **Discuss benefits and responsibilities of participation, and gauge leadership's willingness to work with the VIQI team in participating centers randomly-selected to one of three conditions:**
    o Implement the selected intervention
    o Send teachers to free training sessions
    o Hire and supervise coaches (at Program level) and work with coaches to schedule ongoing coaching sessions with teachers
    o Ensure that teachers set aside time to meet with their coach and attend trainings as determined by intervention
    o Facilitate data collection

Center-Level Topics

- **Discuss outstanding center-level questions that were not covered during Screening Calls (see Screening Protocol for Phone Calls, Attachment A.2).**

- **Discuss additional questions regarding staffing practices:**
    o Supervision of teachers (format, focus and frequency)
    o Teacher pairings/assignments in 3 and 4-year-old classrooms (generally kept the same each year, rotated every year? How stable are pairings within a year?)
    o Hiring practices (including documents regarding hiring policies and processes, typical timeline, position requirements)

- **Discuss center-level management information systems:**
    o Data systems at the center level
    o Data sources and the ways in which those data are used by the center
    o What child-level information is tracked (individual characteristics, family characteristics, attendance, assessment information, etc.)?
    o Do centers feed into a central data system?

Sample language for closing:

Thank you again for taking the time to talk with us. Over the next few months, we will determine which programs and centers are a good fit for inclusion in the study. If your program is chosen (and if you are interested in participating), we will contact you about scheduling a time to come back and talk through next steps. In the meantime, if you have any questions please call me.

Facilitators will discuss timeline for next steps, including a process for follow-up if needed.

Site Visit Powerpoint

Site Visit Powerpoint

VIQI

Variations in Implementation
of Quality Interventions

Presentation Overview

- Project Description and Goals
- Research Questions
- Study Design
- Benefits to Participation
- Next Steps

Note: these prototype/template slides are designed to provide examples of the kinds of language that will be used during site recruitment calls and visits. Study team members will select slides and/or adapt language as needed, depending on the interests/expertise of the audiences with whom they are speaking. For example, information about full-scale phase would not be covered in meetings with potential pilot centers.

What is VIQI?

- Important national study of different approaches to improving quality in early care and education (ECE) centers

- Builds on the premise that high-quality ECE matters in children's lives

- Promising approaches to improving quality via curriculum and PD exist, but we need more evidence about which approaches are most effective for supporting children's learning

VIQI goals

- Build knowledge to guide ECE programming and practitioner decision making:

  - How can we ensure ECE makes a difference in children's lives?

  - Which aspects of classroom quality are key to children's growth and development?

  - What levels of quality are needed to support children's learning?

  - In what contexts and situations are approaches to strengthening quality most effective? How/why are they effective?

A Unique Opportunity for Centers

- **Innovate to improve children's skills.** Provide teachers with ongoing support in implementing curricular approaches that evidence suggests should improve children's skills more effectively than current practices

- **Receive free materials, resources and training** and coaching for teachers (led by nationally-recognized curriculum developers)

- **Partner with national and local leaders** in an historic effort to build evidence about which approaches are most effective

VIQI study team

- Sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- Conducted by
  - MDRC, in partnership with
  - MEF Associates
  - Abt Associates
  - Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

- Office of Head Start and Office of Child Care are helping to set priorities for VIQI

VIQI project: 2 phases

- **Pilot study**
  - Up to 24 centers will participate (in one locality)

- **Full-scale study**
  - About 165 centers will participate (in seven localities)

Pilot study

- Study of 3 different approaches: promising curricula with training (provided by curriculum developers) and in-classroom coaching

Connect4Learning	Creative Curriculum	Focus

- *All* aim to support teacher-child interactions *and* to promote children's development in multiple domains. See handouts for details.

- Focus on feasibility, refine study design, address implementation challenges

Pilot study

- Random assignment of centers to 1 of 4 groups:

Connect4Learning Group
Receives *Connect4Learning* materials, training and in-class coaching support

Focus Group
Receives *Focus* materials, training, and in-class coaching support

Creative Curriculum Group
Receives *latest version of Creative Curriculum* materials, training, and in-class coaching support

Comparison Group
Operates as usual

- ALL receive funds and technical assistance to support study participation

Full-scale study

- Study of 2 different approaches: promising curricula with training and in-classroom coaching

TBD Curriculum (Chosen based on lessons from Pilot)	Creative Curriculum

- Build evidence about how different aspects of quality support children's learning, and in what contexts and situations different approaches to strengthening quality are most effective

Full-scale study

- Random assignment of centers to 1 of 3 groups:

Curriculum Group 1
Receives TBD curricular materials, training, and in-class coaching support

Creative Curriculum Group
Receives *latest version of Creative Curriculum* materials, training, and in-class coaching support

Comparison Group
Operates as usual
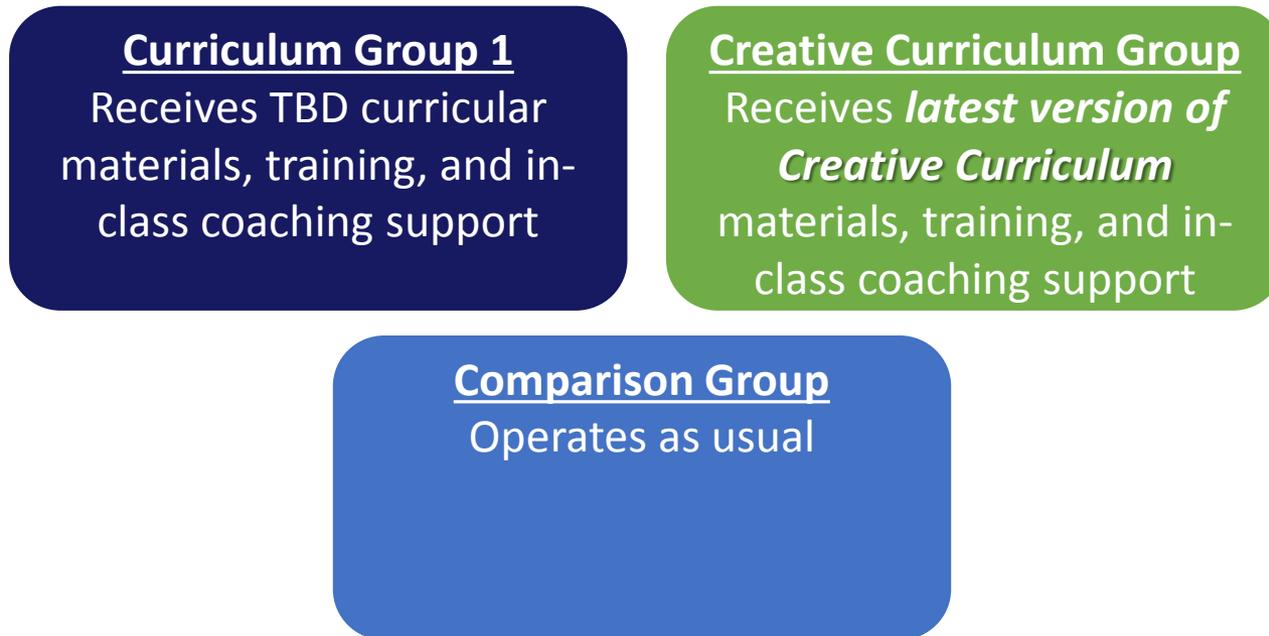
- ALL receive funds and technical assistance to support study participation

Professional Development through VIQI

To support teachers in implementing the curricular approaches, centers in the *curriculum groups* receive:

- Training designed and delivered by curriculum developers

- Resources to hire coaches

- Bi-weekly coaching to support teachers in implementing the curricular approaches

Why random assignment?

- Most fair and equitable way to "roll out" the different approaches among interested centers

- Most rigorous and reliable way to study the effects of the approaches
  - Centers in different groups will have similar characteristics, on average, before the approaches are installed
  - If find differences across groups, can be confident differences are due to the approaches and not something else

- Will help identify which aspects of quality and learning opportunities in the classroom promote children's skills and growth the most

Desired program and center characteristics

- Multi-center programs, each center operating at least 2 full-day classrooms with a mix of 3- and 4-year-olds

- Willing to implement VIQI's curricular approaches for improving quality

- Support involvement of center directors, teachers, and assistant teachers in training and in-classroom coaching activities

- Demonstrated experience running ECE centers for at least 2 years

VIQI researcher-practitioner partnership

- VIQI team provides ongoing support, technical assistance, and communication with partnering programs and centers

- Programs and centers enable and allow directors, coaches, teachers and assistant teachers to:
  - Engage in training and in-class coaching activities, in line with study procedures
  - Participate in data collection and research procedures

VIQI study team responsibilities

- **Provide funding and resources** to train and support coaches, teachers and assistant teachers on the curricular approaches

- **Understand center's priorities and provide technical assistance** to help centers meet project goals, align with priorities/requirements, and **limit burden on center staff**

- **Conduct field research** with center directors, teachers and assistant teachers, and coaches via surveys, interviews, and independent observations

- **Analyze data**, **share lessons**, and **publish reports**

Program/center responsibilities

- **Maintain close communication** with study team

- Work with study team to develop a plan for **hiring and supervision of coaches**

- Enable directors, coaches, teachers and assistant teachers to **engage in training and in-class coaching activities**

- Allow directors, coaches, teachers and assistant teachers to **participate in field research**, including interviews, surveys, logs and observations of classroom activities

Coach responsibilities

- **Maintain close communication** with study team
- Work with study team to develop plan for and implement **training and support** of teachers and assistant teachers on the curricular approaches
- **Engage in training** and **conduct in-class coaching** sessions with teachers and assistant teachers, in line with study procedures
- **Participate in field research**, including interviews, surveys, and logs

Teacher/assistant teacher responsibilities

- **Attend training and in-class coaching sessions**, in line with study procedures

- **Deliver one of the curricular approaches** in their classroom, in line with study procedures

- **Participate in field research**, including interviews, surveys, logs, and classroom observations

Overview of data collection activities

Pilot Study	Full-Scale Study
Administrator, coach, teacher surveys	*Same as Pilot plus:*
Classroom observations	Parent consent & information form
Teacher & coach logs	Child assessments
Interviews & focus groups	

VIQI Pilot Study Timeline

	2018									2019					
Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Recruitment															
Sign MOU															
Administrator, Coach, Teacher Surveys													Admin, Coach, Teacher Survey		
	Classroom Obs (1x)										Classroom Obs (2x)				
		Random Assignment													
					Training										
						Curriculum Implementation, Ongoing Teacher Training & Coaching									
						Weekly Teacher Logs									
						Biweekly Coach Logs									
										Fidelity Visit, Focus Groups					

VIQI Full-Scale Study Timeline

							2019							2019					
Summer	Fall	Winter	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Recruitment																		
		Sign MOU																
			Administrator, Coach, Teacher Surveys													**Admin, Coach, Teacher Survey**		
				Classroom Obs (1x)										**Classroom Obs (2x)**				
					Random Assignment													
								Train-ing										
									Curriculum Implementation, Ongoing Teacher Training & Coaching									
									Weekly Teacher Logs									
									Biweekly Coach Logs									
														Fidelity Visit, Focus Groups				

Benefits of participation

- ALL centers receive:
  - Funds and technical assistance to support study participation
  - Opportunity to build evidence base guiding early childhood education policy and practitioner decisions
  - Increased visibility as part of a national project

- Centers in each of the curriculum groups receive:
  - Access to most recent edition of leading curricular materials
  - Access to ongoing teacher training and in-classroom coaching

For more information, please contact:
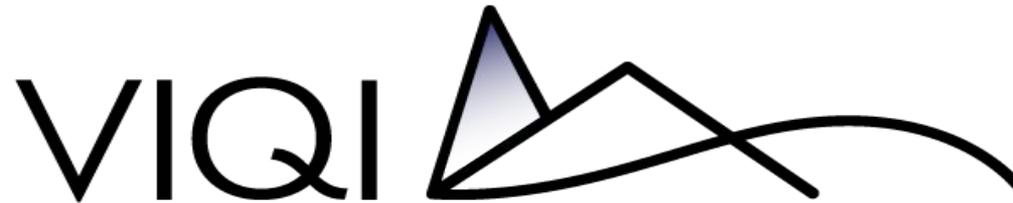
VIQI
Variations in Implementation
of Quality Interventions

Email Templates to Communicate Random Assignment Results (PILOT)

Email to Communicate Random Assignment Results to Program-Level Staff

Email subject line: Next Steps on VIQI Project

Dear _____:

We have news about your centers' status in the VIQI project! As previously discussed, being part of the VIQI project means that your centers will be randomly assigned to one of three curricular approaches, or to a "comparison group" that will continue business-as-usual.

Your centers' results are listed below. As a reminder, assignments are done randomly (like a flip of a coin) and have nothing to do with any characteristics of the individual centers.

Center	Classroom	VIQI Assignment
Center Name	#1	
	#2	
Center Name	#1	
	#2	
Center Name	#1	
	#2	
Center Name	#1	
	#2	

We are in the process of completing an addendum to your Memorandum of Agreement, which will include these center assignments. You should receive that document shortly. We will also send letters informing individual centers of their assignment and will send you a copy of that letter as well.

Thank you so much for your assistance during the process! We are looking forward to working with you this next year and trust that you will find the VIQI project a worthwhile and rewarding experience to help the early childhood field build knowledge about how to best support young children's learning. Please feel free to contact me or [name of liaison] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

NAME
[Insert ops team lead name and contact information here]

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Email to Communicate Random Assignment Results to Center-Level Administrators

Email subject line: Next Steps on VIQI Project

Dear _____:

We have news about your center's status in the VIQI project! As a reminder, being part of the VIQI project means that your center will be randomly assigned to one of three curricular approaches or to a "comparison group" that will continue business-as-usual.

Your center's results are listed below. As a reminder, assignments are done randomly (like a flip of a coin) and have nothing to do with any characteristics of the individual centers.

Assignment for VIQI: [insert here]

Participating classrooms: [insert here]

We will send letters informing your teachers and assistant teachers of their assignments and send you a copy of the teacher letter.

Thank you so much for your assistance during the process! We are looking forward to working with you this next year and trust that you will find the VIQI project a worthwhile and rewarding experience to help the early childhood field build knowledge about how to best support young children's learning. Please feel free to contact me or [name of liaison] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

NAME
[Insert ops team lead name and contact information here]

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Letter to Communicate Random Assignment Results to Center-Level Teaching Staff

Email subject line: Next Steps on VIQI Project

Dear _____:

We have news about your center's status in the VIQI project! As you know, being part of the VIQI project means that your center will be randomly assigned to one of several curricular approaches or to a "comparison group" that will continue business-as-usual. Your center's results are listed below. As a reminder, assignments are done randomly (like a flip of a coin) and have nothing to do with any characteristics of the individual centers.

Assignment for VIQI: [insert here]

Participating classrooms: [insert here]

Thank you so much for your assistance during the process! We are looking forward to working with you this next year and trust that you will find the VIQI project a worthwhile and rewarding experience to help the early childhood field build knowledge about how to best support young children's learning. Please feel free to contact me or [name of liaison] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

NAME
[Insert ops team lead name and contact information here]

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F. Email Templates to Communicate Random Assignment Results (FULL-SCALE)

Email to Communicate Random Assignment Results to Program-Level Staff

Email subject line: Next Steps on VIQI Project

Dear _____:

We have news about your centers' status in the VIQI project! As previously discussed, being part of the VIQI project means that each participating center will be randomly assigned to one of two curricular approaches or to a "comparison group" that will continue business-as-usual. Your results are listed below. As a reminder, assignments are done randomly (like a flip of a coin) and have nothing to do with any characteristics of individual centers.

Center	Classroom	VIQI Assignment
Center Name	#1	
	#2	
	#3	
Center Name	#1	
	#2	
	#3	
Center Name	#1	
	#2	
	#3	
Center Name	#1	
	#2	
	#3	

We are in the process of completing an addendum to your Memorandum of Agreement, which will include these center assignments. You should receive that document shortly. We will also send letters informing individual centers of their assignment and will send you a copy of that letter as well.

Thank you so much for your assistance during the process! We are looking forward to working with you this next year and trust that you will find the VIQI project a worthwhile and rewarding experience to help the early childhood field build knowledge about how to best support young children's learning. Please feel free to contact me or [name of liaison] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

NAME
[Insert ops team lead name and contact information here]

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Letter to Communicate Random Assignment Results to Center-Level Administrators

Email subject line: Next Steps on VIQI Project

Dear _____:

We have news about your center's status in the VIQI project! As previously discussed, being part of the VIQI project means that each participating center will be randomly assigned to one of two curricular approaches or to a "comparison group" that will continue business-as-usual. Your results are listed below. As a reminder, assignments are done randomly (like a flip of a coin) and have nothing to do with any characteristics of individual centers.

Assignment for VIQI: [insert here]

Participating classrooms: [insert here]

We will send letters informing your teachers and assistant teachers of their assignments and send you a copy of the teacher letter.

Thank you so much for your assistance during the process! We are looking forward to working with you this next year and trust that you will find the VIQI project a worthwhile and rewarding experience to help the early childhood field build knowledge about how to best support young children's learning. Please feel free to contact me or [name of liaison] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

NAME
[Insert ops team lead name and contact information here]

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Letter to Communicate Random Assignment Results to Center-Level Teaching Staff

Email subject line: Next Steps on VIQI Project

Dear _____:

We have news about your center's status in the VIQI project! As previously discussed, being part of the VIQI project means that each participating center will be randomly assigned to one of two curricular approaches or to a "comparison group" that will continue business-as-usual. Your results are listed below. As a reminder, assignments are done randomly (like a flip of a coin) and have nothing to do with any characteristics of individual centers.

Random Assignment Status: [insert here]

Participating classrooms: [insert here]

Thank you so much for your assistance during the process! We are looking forward to working with you this next year and trust that you will find the VIQI project a worthwhile and rewarding experience to help the early childhood field build knowledge about how to best support young children's learning. Please feel free to contact me or [name of liaison] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

NAME
[Insert ops team lead name and contact information here]

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