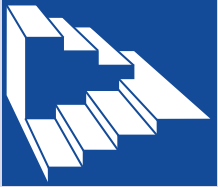


# THE BANISTER

CRYSTAL



STAIRS, INC.

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## What's Quality?



**IT DEPENDS  
ON WHO'S  
ASKING**

**By Karen Hill  
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**H**ow should we define quality? Can it be the same for every audience—parents, directors, teachers, family child care providers? If you really think about it, the three ingredients that most define quality are: PEOPLE, PROGRAM, and PLACE.

You might look at different things under each heading, but in the final analysis **PEOPLE** count the most. Directors want a good staff. Teachers want a director who will be supportive, fair and respectful. Parents want to entrust the care of their children to someone who manages well and teaches or supervises teachers who are well-trained and nurturing.

What goes on every day—the schedule, the curriculum, nutrition—describes the **PROGRAM**. If you're a parent you want this to be child-centered. Teachers want a program that helps with their daily planning but allows flexibility. Directors want a program they can point to as being effective with children's learning. Family child care providers want safety and learning in a home-like setting.

**PLACE** is often the most overlooked element of quality. It includes the layout, design, equipment and safety of the environment, standards of cleanliness, and the variety, appropriateness and accessibility of toys and materials for the children. Whether you manage a center, teach in a program, provide care in your home, or are a parent deciding where to send your child, the building or home, and the surroundings really do make a big difference for safety and a child-friendly experience. For everyone involved, feeling good about the place inspires confidence in the program.

So, no matter what your reason for looking at quality, start with the PEOPLE, PROGRAM and PLACE. These three categories almost always get to the bottom line of what's best for children. And isn't that what quality is all about?

# Martha's Corner

I'd like to share some insights from just two of the 50 providers I've visited in the past nine months.

Ms. Rita Chaney, a family child care provider, successfully used the "Parent+Provider" article



from the Fall 2008 *Banister* as a guide in conducting her first parent

meeting for the school year. She and her parents have developed a much stronger line of communication which, in turn, makes for a better relationship for both parents and the provider.

Provider Gwendolyn Comeaux created a questionnaire so her parents could evaluate the quality of 13 different aspects of her program. Parents assigned a number from 1 to 5, with 1 = Below Expectation and 5 = Significantly Above Expectation. Some of the questions were:

■ Do we communicate effectively?

■ Do you feel your children are in a safe and nurturing environment?

■ Are you satisfied with our educational curriculum?

■ Are you satisfied with our meals and snacks?

■ Are your children happy with us?

Ms. Comeaux said the results let her know "that I was doing the right thing" and also "gave me areas of improvement."

# Take Note

## Go Green !!!

Become an Eco-Healthy Child Care (EHCC) provider. A free, national program for licensed and license-exempt providers. EHCC educates providers about how to reduce the toxics in their facilities, endorses providers who have eco-healthy practices, and encourages parents to choose eco-healthy child care programs. To learn more, go to the EHCC web site at [www.oeonline.org/kidshealth/ehcc](http://www.oeonline.org/kidshealth/ehcc). Use the Eco-Healthy Child Care Checklist on their web site to see how "green" you are now. You can also call (503) 222-1963, ext.119 or e-mail to [hester@oeonline.org](mailto:hester@oeonline.org) for information.

## Get the Facts FAST!!

Providers, if you have an e-mail address you can get the latest information about your claim on any day or at any time during the week. Go to [www.crystalstairs.org](http://www.crystalstairs.org), click on "Providers," then click on "Claims Processing Status." Follow the easy registration instructions and join hundreds of other providers who use this service every day.

## Share Your Story

What does being a Crystal Stairs parent or provider mean to you? Have we made a difference in your life? If you've had a special experience or would like to share your thoughts about the value of what we do, please let us know at [customerservice@crystalstairs.org](mailto:customerservice@crystalstairs.org).

## "Do-It-Yourself" Child Care Referrals

Parents, are you looking for a licensed provider? Go to [www.crystalstairs.org](http://www.crystalstairs.org) and click on "Looking for Child Care." Sign up once and you can use this free service on any day or at any time during the week to find providers that meet your needs.

# When Children Ask ‘How Does That Work?’

## HELPING CHILDREN EXPLORE THEIR WORLD

In their newest book, *From My Side: Being a Child*, Sylvia Chard and Yvonne Kogan talk about children investigating and recording.

“The world has so much to offer when adults can help children investigate interesting things and extend their understanding.”

■ “When children notice and become interested in something, they can explore it in a variety of ways. They can push and pull, poke and tear, touch and feel textures. They may interact with a substance or material briefly, or they may persist for long periods in their investigations.”

■ “In safe locations, children can observe closely, imitate, try out actions, and respond to reactions. With help, children can design experiments to test their ideas. They can take things apart, mix things together, and combine objects to tell a story.”

■ “Children can ask adults to show and tell them things and they can listen to explanations. Children



seem especially interested when familiar things are explained to them in detail. Adults can help them see beyond the surface of things.”

■ “Children can appreciate the value of counting, measuring, dismantling, and putting things in

order. They can see which things belong together and which are different in important ways. They can talk with each other about what they are observing so they have more to think about as they explore.”

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## Berry, Berry Smart!

### BERRIES AS BRAIN BOOSTERS AND FUN FOOD

**B**erries are a tasty, colorful food that most children love. Did you know that berries are also one of the best sources of antioxidants that energize brain cells and enhance learning ability and memory?

These powerhouses for young minds are plentiful in summer and can be served in many ways. Strawberries are a popular finger food snack, cereal topper, and a smoothie, salad or dessert ingredient.

Did you know that the color of a berry has something to do with its power? Introduce children to other members of the berry family—blueberries, raspberries, blackberries,

cranberries—for their extra brain-boosting abilities.

Blueberries are especially good at this but children may not like their taste. So, “sneak” them into a smoothie with other fruits, try blueberry yogurt, or cook them with oatmeal or other healthy hot cereals.

Fresh is great but freezing doesn’t reduce berries’ food value. Store up when lots of different berries are available at good prices from the grocery store or farmers markets. Dried berries also pack a brain-punch. They can be snack food or added to cookies, muffins, quick breads and salads.

One last tip. Berries provide the same brain-boosting benefits for adults. So, be “berry, berry smart” and serve yourself.





# Book a Ticket for Summer Fun

## READING IS A WONDERFUL 'DO ANYWHERE' ACTIVITY

Reading to and with children offers education, enrichment, exploration and enchantment. It also creates an engaging relationship between the reader and the listener. Think about the times you've been reading to a child and they've stopped you with a question that leads into a whole, new conversation. Books can build bonds of trust and comfort—that's why children will ask you to read the same story over and over, read it themselves when they are older, and then share it with their own children.

Select books for children so their content and vocabulary are "age-appropriate." Content should produce delight not fright, attention and not boredom. The words should be understandable, but be prepared when a little one asks you "What does that word mean?"

Books are also a gateway to the diverse, multicultural world you and your children live in every day. Reading about different social, ethnic and cultural customs and experiences can show children how to

welcome diversity rather than fear it.

There are many resources for finding good reading selections for children of different ages. Ask your child care provider, visit the local library, get suggestions or even exchange books with your family, friends and co-workers, and try some of our ideas.

- Look for children's books in thrift stores and shops that sell used books.

- Amazon.com and other on-line book dealers usually have affordable used copies of the same books they sell new.

- Shop when book stores have sales or special offers like buy two and get one free.

- Watch for sales at public libraries when they clear their shelves for new books.

- Check out books from the library at your child's public school.

- Look for books when you shop for groceries or household items at supermarkets, drug stores and big discount stores.



Use these websites to find new, used and free books, plus arts and crafts, toys and games, reading tips, and other fun things for children of all ages. Each website address begins with www.

- [genesisartsandbooks.com](http://genesisartsandbooks.com)
- [rif.org](http://rif.org)
- [chinaberry.com](http://chinaberry.com)
- [greatschools.net](http://greatschools.net)
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