ECE in California: An urgent concern

- 33% of eligible children served
- 4 out of 10 NIEER preschool quality benchmarks
- 1.8% of California budget spent on ECE
- $1 billion cut in the recession, and not yet recovered

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LPI’s ECE research

The Road to High-Quality Early Learning
Lessons From the States
Marjorie Wechsler, David Kirp, Titiaya Tirabu Ali, Madelyn Gardner, Anna Maier, Hanna Weinick, and Patrick M. Shields
June 2019

Understanding California’s Early Care and Education System
Hanna Melnick, Titiaya Tirabu Ali, Madelyn Gardner, Anna Maier, and Marjorie Wechsler
May 2020

Building an Early Learning System That Works
Next Steps for California
By Hanna Melnick, Beth Mejoy, Madelyn Gardner, Madelena Wootester, and Anna Maier
January 2021
“I was making minimum wage just to get by and I had no other support. ...I didn’t make enough money for rent and child care, so I couldn’t keep working.

I signed up for school and applied for CalWORKs. In addition to paying taxes...I was able to raise four amazing kids who also value education.

-- Jennifer LaBounty


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About the research
ECE Programs and Their Administration
California funds multiple ECE programs

- **State Preschool**: 136,107 enrollment
- **Head Start / Early Head Start**: 105,210 enrollment
- **Alternative Payment Programs**: 83,311 enrollment
- **Transitional Kindergarten**: 81,832 enrollment
- **General Child Care & Development**: 23,656 enrollment

Note: Data for children birth to age 5 in a single month in 2015-16.
Many agencies administer ECE programs
Each county administers ECE differently

- **San Bernardino County**
  - County Office of Education
  - Child Care Resource Center (Non-Profit)
  - Preschool Services Department (County Board of Supervisors)
  - First 5 San Bernardino

- **San Luis Obispo County**
  - County Office of Education
  - Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County (CAPSLO) (Non-Profit)
  - First 5 San Luis Obispo

- **Individual Programs**
  - LPC Coordinator
  - State QRIS Block Grants
  - Alternative Payment Program
  - Resource and Referral
  - Head Start

-David Fleishman, Executive Director, 4Cs of San Mateo County

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Recommendation: Build a coherent system of ECE administration

1) Identify a state-level governing body to coordinate all ECE programs.

2) Streamline regional administration with a single county coordinating body.
Recommendation: Build a coherent system of ECE administration

3) Develop a **one-stop shop** for parents and providers.

North Carolina’s Smart Start provides a model for a one-stop shop
California’s ECE Programs Serve Few Eligible Children

- Birth to Age 3: 14% Eligible, 38% Enrolled
- 3-Year-Olds: 38% Eligible, 69% Enrolled
- 4-Year-Olds: 69% Eligible

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You get a 50¢ increase—which is going to be approximately $1,040 a year—but you’re not going to qualify for child care, which is then going to cost you $15,000 a year.

Kim McDougal, Executive Director of YMCA Childcare Resource Services in San Diego County
Families can’t find the care they need

- Complex enrollment
- Lack of full-day, alternative hour care
- Limited rural options
Licensed care is scarce in every county

- Low reimbursement rates
- Unaffordable facilities
- Inflexible contracts

Shortage of Licensed Care
1) Establish **universal preschool for 4-year-olds**.

West Virginia and Oklahoma provide universal access through mixed-delivery systems.
Recommendation:
Make ECE affordable for all children birth to age 5

2) Make preschool affordable for all 3-year-olds using a sliding fee scale that eliminates the “income cliff.”

3) Ensure access to subsidized child care on a sliding fee scale for all infants and toddlers.
## Educator Credential Requirements Vary by Program

Minimum requirements for preschool teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative Payment Program</th>
<th>Degree Requirement</th>
<th>ECE Coursework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>License-Exempt Providers</td>
<td>No requirement</td>
<td>No requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Child Care Homes</td>
<td>No requirement</td>
<td>No requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centers</td>
<td>No requirement</td>
<td>12 units</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Transitional Kindergarten   | Bachelor's degree & teaching credential | 24 units |
| California State Preschool Program | No degree requirement, must have 40 units of college coursework | 24 units |
| Head Start                  | Associate or bachelor's degree*         | Degree must be in ECE or related field |
California’s Early Educators Earn Very Low Wages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Median Annual Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child care worker</td>
<td>$24,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool teacher</td>
<td>$31,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten teacher</td>
<td>$63,940</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Educators sometimes return to school only to find that “a lot of coursework they had taken before is not counted towards a degree at all.”

—Cindy Faulkner, Operations Manager at First 5 San Bernardino

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Recommendation: Build a well-qualified workforce

1) Increase expectations and support for educators’ higher education and training, starting with preschool.

2) Increase reimbursement rates to enhance

New Jersey raised educator requirements and offered scholarships

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Program Quality

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## California’s ECE Programs Have Different Quality Standards

### Minimum program standards for 4-year-olds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternate Payment Program</th>
<th>Minimum Teacher Requirements</th>
<th>Staff-to-Child Ratios</th>
<th>Curriculum Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>License-Exempt Providers</td>
<td>![x] No requirement</td>
<td>![x] No requirement</td>
<td>![x] No requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Child Care Homes</td>
<td>![x] No requirement</td>
<td>![✓] 1:8&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>![x] No requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centers</td>
<td>![✓] 12 ECE units</td>
<td>![✓] 1:12</td>
<td>![x] No requirement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Transitional Kindergarten

- Teaching credential and 24 ECE units
- No requirement<sup>b</sup>
- Developmentally appropriate curriculum

### California State Preschool Program

- 24 ECE units plus 16 general education units
- 1:8
- Developmentally appropriate curriculum

### Head Start

- A.A. or B.A.<sup>c</sup>
- 1:10
- Developmentally appropriate curriculum
Only 14% of providers participate in Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRISs)
Coaching is very expensive, [so it’s] hard for counties to expand.”

—Edirle Menezes, Early Childhood Education Program Officer, First 5 Contra Costa
Recommendation:

Improve the quality of all ECE programs

1) **Raise quality requirements** for programs with the lowest standards.

2) Ensure all state-supported programs **participate in quality improvement activities**.
3) Ensure access to **coaching and other job-embedded supports** for all ECE providers

*Every Michigan preschool classroom has a coach*
California can do better

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Improving Program Administration
Panel Discussion
Improving Program Administration

Karla Pleitéz Howell (moderator)
Director of Educational Equity, Advancement Project

Raechelle Bowlay-Sutton
Coordinator, San Luis Obispo County Child Care Planning Council

Sean Casey
Executive Director, First 5 Contra Costa

Sarah Neville-Morgan
Director of the Early Education and Support Division, California Department of Education

Natalie Woods Andrews
Director of Early Learning, Sacramento County Office of Education; Director, California Preschool Instructional Network

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Ensuring High-Quality Preschool in an Expanded ECE System

Panel Discussion
Ensuring High-Quality Preschool in an Expanded ECE System

Marjorie Wechsler (moderator)
Principal Research Manager, Learning Policy Institute

Wendy Dickens
Executive Director, First 5 Shasta

Erin Gabel
Deputy Director for External and Governmental Affairs, First 5 California

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Senior Managing Director of Education Policy, Children Now

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