



Early Learning is Important

A child's path to success in school and in life begins at birth. Research tells us that the ages of 0-5 are the most important years for a child's social, emotional, and mental development. During this period of rapid brain growth, a child learns information very quickly, soaking up words, rhymes, songs, and images. This is why it is so important that children have quality educational experiences at home and at school during these early years.

Parents are their child's first and lifelong teacher. Through everyday activities such as playing hide-and-seek or reading a story at bedtime, parents are supporting their child's learning. How can parents be confident their child will receive the educational opportunities they need in the early years? The answer is preschool and early education programs.



A child's vocabulary as early as age 3 can predict third grade reading achievement.

Eighty-five percent of brain growth occurs from birth to age 5

Before the third grade, children learn to read.
After the third grade, children read to learn.



Advocate for Quality Preschools

There are many different types of early education programs. They range from a center-based program in which a child is enrolled in a traditional classroom, to home visitation where an educator provides classes to the parent and child in their home. Other preschool opportunities include parent workshops and programs for parents and children to build skills together. The key to a strong early education program is quality. Below are some questions you can ask to assess the quality of a preschool program.

- If it is a center-based program or traditional classroom, is the program licensed?** Confirm that the program is licensed by the State of California. All programs must display their license in a prominent area.
- Is the program clean, safe, and welcoming?** Check that the environment is clean, safe, and filled with age-appropriate books and toys.
- Are the teachers qualified?** Center-based preschool programs are required to employ teachers with at least an Associates Degree.
- How many students are in a classroom?** The National Association for the Education of Young Children recommends one teacher for every eight to ten children between the ages of 4 and 5 years.
- Do teachers have the skills to support a child's learning?** Look for a nurturing environment in which children feel secure enough to try new things.
- Does the program support a child's learning?** Programs should have read aloud times, as well as hands-on exploration of math, science, art, music, and dramatic play.
- Are parents engaged in their child's learning?** Identify opportunities for parents to attend workshops, volunteer for activities, and participate in decision-making.



Families In Schools
Building Partnerships for Student Success

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Preschool Makes the Difference!

A Parent's Guide to Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Funding Opportunities for Early Learning



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FIRST 5 LA
Champions For Our Children
www.First5LA.org



CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

School Funding Has Changed!

What is the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)?

The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) was signed into California law on July 1, 2013. LCFF changes how money is distributed from the state to school districts. It provides more money to schools with large numbers of underserved students, like children from low-income families, English learners, and foster youth. Here is how it works:

\$ Base Grant: School districts will receive a minimum amount of \$6,845 per student. This amount will vary based on grade levels (K-3, 4-6, 7-8, and 9-12) to meet the unique needs of each student.

\$\$ Supplemental Grant: Students from low-income families, English learners, and foster youth have greater needs that require more resources. Under LCFF, school districts will receive an additional 20% of the base grant for students who are from low-income families, English learners, or foster youth.

\$\$\$ Concentration Grant: School districts with 55% or more of their students qualifying for supplemental funding because their students are from low-income families, English learners, and foster youth will receive an additional 50% of the base grant. Districts falling in this category will receive these funds plus the 20% supplemental funds.



How can LCFF support early learning?

Over the past few years, we have seen a dramatic reduction and/or elimination of preschool programs. Parents can recommend that their school district use the LCFF money to expand preschool opportunities for students. Some examples include:

- **Center-Based Preschool** – Traditional classroom setting for preschool age children.
- **Home Visitation** – Educators who provide weekly classes at a family's home.
- **Parent Engagement** – Workshops that help parents support their child's learning.
- **Parent-Child Programs** – Workshops for parents and children to learn together.
- **Kindergarten Transition** – Summer programs that help families prepare for kindergarten.

Get Involved Today!

Your Voice Matters

Schools are currently finalizing their budgets for next school year. The districts themselves will decide how to use LCFF funds, but they are first required to get recommendations from parents and community members on how best to spend the money. Ask principals and school board members questions about school funding:

- How much importance will the school district place on early learning and preschool?
- How much money will the district dedicate to early learning and preschool?
- How will the school district help preschool students with the most needs? Are there any additional programs for preschool students who are from low-income families, English learners, or foster youth?
- How can parents and community become involved in developing the plan to support early learners?
- How is the district ensuring that children have quality preschool opportunities?
- How will we know districts are accountable for including parents and community in the LCFF budget decisions?

What Families Can Do

- **Seek** quality early learning and preschool programs for your own child.
- **Share** this brochure with others and inform them about the importance of early education.
- **Join** a parent association, school council, or community organization that advocates for preschool.
- **Speak** at a school board meeting about the need for more preschool programs.
- **Send** a letter to the local Superintendent advocating for more preschool opportunities.
- **Ask** to be kept informed about how the school is spending its money and involving parents in the process.

Parents Matter NOW
www.parentsmatternow.org



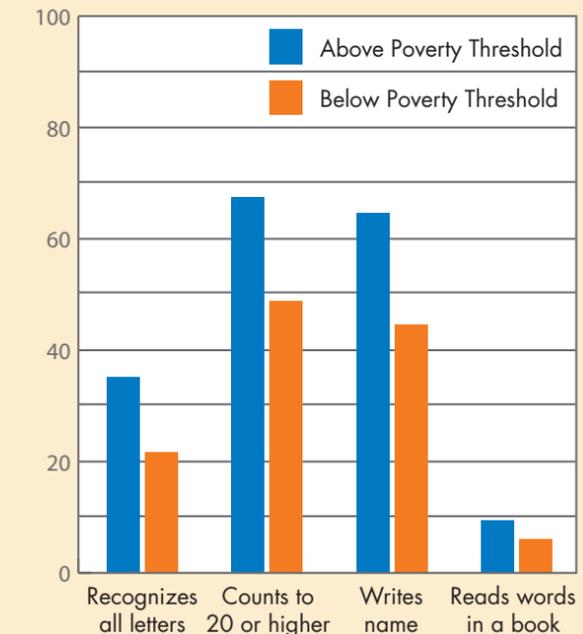
The Benefits of Preschool

Children Who Start Ahead, Stay Ahead

As early as 18 months, children from low-income families begin to fall behind in vocabulary development and skills needed for academic success. Approximately three out of four third-grade students with poor reading skills continue to struggle through high school. With quality preschool opportunities, children who start ahead, stay ahead.

Research tells us that children who attend preschool get better grades throughout their school years and are more likely to graduate from high school.

Percentage of Children Ages 3-6 with Selected School Readiness Skills, by Poverty Status



SELECTED SCHOOL READINESS SKILLS

Source: O'Donnell, Kevin. Parents' Reports of the School Readiness of Young Children from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2007. Table 2 National Center for Education Statistics. August 2008. www.childtrendsdatabank.org/?q=node/291

Preschool Supports the Economy

Our community can gain tremendous benefits by supporting quality early education programs. For example:

- **Early education programs promote schooling and reduce crime.**
- **The preschool industry generates \$1.9 billion annually for the Los Angeles economy.**
- **Early education provides more than 65,000 full-time jobs in Los Angeles County.**

The Center for Community Economic Development, 2011

