The Early Care and Education Career Development Policy Project

First 5 LA is committed to prioritizing investments that will support and sustain optimal development of children 0 to 5 and their families in Los Angeles County and creating long-term sustainable change, specifically through the promotion of policy change and systems integration. First 5 LA is an advocacy organization for children, dedicated to taking a leadership role in working collaboratively with “stakeholders, local experts and [the leadership of its board] to positively influence public policy.” First 5 LA’s Public Policy Agenda articulates 10 policy goals it will pursue to achieve the Commission’s work on its four organizational goals, including ensuring that children are ready for kindergarten.

The CDP Project Policy Agenda herein specifically supports two connected First 5 LA Policy Agenda goals:

- Strengthen the prenatal to 5 workforce.
- Expand access to promote and improve quality of early care and education programs.

First 5 LA expanded its early care and education investment portfolio beyond program services to include the promotion and professionalization of the early care and education workforce. As a part of this effort, First 5 LA developed the Career Development Policy (CDP) Project to achieve long-term sustainable change for the early care and education workforce through the promotion of policies that affect and promote the retention of the workforce, and is partnering with the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) to execute the work in this area. The CDP Project is a centerpiece of the policy component of First 5 LA’s more than $50 million workforce investment portfolio. Through the CDP Project, First 5 LA has expanded its capacity to be a voice for children 0 to 5 within the local and state public policy arena and, more specifically, for the early care and education workforce to promote quality care and education.

SPECIFICALLY, THE CDP PROJECT GOALS TO BE ACHIEVED BY 2015 ARE:

- Change or preserve policies to improve the retention of a quality early care and education workforce in Los Angeles County.
- Increase policy-maker support for improved early care and education workforce policies.
- Increase the visibility of early care and education as an investment priority.
- Increase the stakeholder base of early care and education workforce advocates.

The CDP Project Policy Agenda underscores the basis for advocacy efforts focused on the promotion of and investment in the early care and education workforce and articulates a set of recommendations demonstrating First 5 LA’s commitment to advancing this workforce policy effort.

The Importance of High-Quality Early Care and Education

THE EARLY YEARS OF LIFE

The research findings that shed light on the relationship between brain development at the early stages of life and a child’s life trajectory have profound implications for sustainable, long-term economic development. It is now recognized that the brain is developed the first 5 years – the years prior to the time when a child enters kindergarten – are critical to a child’s development and realization of his or her potential. The research makes clear that an investment in early care and education yields a high return. Specifically, children who attend high-quality early education programs:

- Are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college.
- Are more likely to be self-sufficient, productive members of society.

Historically, early care and education settings – child care and preschool – for infants, toddlers and young children, were viewed solely from the perspective of enabling parents to function in the workforce. Policy governing the provision and funding of early care and education was focused on safety and accessibility.

Current thinking about early care and education environments has evolved to more accurately reflect what we know from the research: that early care and educational opportunities for children 0 to 5 are an integral component of allowing children to reach their life-long potential and has profound implications for sustainable, long-term economic development.

Understanding that the care and services children receive in these settings is about child development and the future of our nation’s children has profound implications in both policy and practice.

There is now broad-based consensus that early care and education is a critical component of improving our nation’s educational system, and a vital investment strategy to ensure our nation’s place in a global economy.

KEY ATTRIBUTES OF QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION:

- Interventions begin early (i.e., children are younger than 5 years old).
- Teachers are well-educated, well-trained, and well-compensated resulting in low staff turnover.
- Class sizes are small with high teacher-child ratios.
- Relationships between teachers and children are seen as central to learning.
- Interventions focus on the whole child – intellectual, social, emotional and physical growth and well-being.
- Children are viewed as active and experiential learners.10

Policy Movements and Developments

THE QUALITY OF CARE

Across the nation, deeper understanding of early childhood development resulting from scientific brain research has translated into policy initiatives for expanding and enhancing early child care programs to provide opportunities for improving children’s life-course outcomes, particularly for those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Moreover, in response to additional research, access to quality early care and education has become a major policy agenda promoted by long-standing and newly founded nonprofit policy and advocacy organizations over the last few decades, such as the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Carnegie Corporation, the New America Foundation, and the last few decades, such as the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Carnegie Corporation, the New America Foundation, and the Los Angeles County Office of Child Care. Counties are taking action in response to the strong reform movement in Los Angeles County and California.

Research has proven that a highly-trained teaching staff is needed for a high-quality educational program, and that learners of all ages benefit more when their teachers have received proper training and education.

The workforce is a key factor influencing early care and education quality, both in terms of teacher training levels and the relationship between the teacher and the child. Research has proven that a highly-trained teaching staff is needed for a high-quality educational program, and that learners of all ages benefit more when their teachers have received proper training and education. Yet traditionally, the focus on the training and education16 for early care and education teachers has received far less attention than efforts for K-12 teachers.

A challenge in meeting the need for highly-trained early care and education teachers is the corresponding need for child care centers and programs to pay commensurate wages to recruit and retain well-prepared teachers. According to Dr. W. Steven Barnett of the National Institute for Early Education Research, recruiting and retaining good teachers is one of the most significant roadblocks to providing high-quality early care and education, with low wages as the single most important factor affecting the hiring and retaining of good teachers.

High turnover among child care workers and preschool teachers17 negatively affects the quality of early care and education programs in two main ways:

- First, research suggests that young children should be cared for by the same teaching staff for at least one year at a time to establish healthy and secure attachments. Because high turnover is pervasive throughout the early care and education field, in effect programs, children may not be allowed to develop stable and affectionate relationships with teachers.19
- Second, many of the teachers who leave tend to be more highly qualified than those who stay, possibly due to higher-trained teachers being able to find more financially rewarding jobs. Thus, as these teachers exit the programs, the overall quality of those child care programs diminishes.

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UNDERSTANDING THE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE

Efforts to promote the importance of quality early care and education for young children and expand access and opportunity have resulted in the development of a strong reform movement in Los Angeles County and California. Little success, however, has been achieved in establishing stable or adequate funding for the requisite workforce.

Policy efforts will need to include a wider constituency of champions to advance policies that promote the early care and education workforce.

Workers employed within the early care and education workforce are categorized within either licensed care or license-exempt care. Due to the lack of reliable data and existing systems and structures for license-exempt workers, policy efforts focus primarily on workers within the licensed care category.

Licensed care providers and teachers1 work primarily within the following program settings:

- Family child care.
- Center-based care.
- State preschool.
- Federal Head Start or Early Head Start.

* Licensed providers and teachers will be referred to as early care and education providers throughout the policy agenda.

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Compared to workers of other selected industries, preschool teachers, and especially child care workers, earn significantly less money. When looking at average salary rates between 2001 and 2011, child care workers also had the lowest increase among workers in several other industries including accountants, waiters/waitresses, construction workers, hairstylist and cosmetologists.

Creating a skilled and stable early care and education workforce is critical to supporting the promotion and integration of early care and education as an integral part of our education system; but, as illustrated, the challenge is layered and policy efforts must be multifaceted. The adoption of standards to govern the quality of early care and education programs must be accompanied by efforts to professionalize (i.e., increasing provider training and education levels and promoting a career trajectory) the workforce and increase teacher compensation commensurate with newly targeted training and educational requirements.

When compared to other teacher categories, members of the early care and education workforce earn a low annual salary. Below are the 2011 average annual salaries for members of the early care and education workforce and other teachers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>NUMBER EMPLOYED</th>
<th>MEAN WAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHILD CARE WORKERS</td>
<td>57,100</td>
<td>$24,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESCHOOL TEACHERS</td>
<td>45,990</td>
<td>$31,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS</td>
<td>26,470</td>
<td>$39,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS</td>
<td>176,110</td>
<td>$63,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS</td>
<td>54,650</td>
<td>$63,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS</td>
<td>115,780</td>
<td>$65,780</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Future cost savings combine with future economic benefits resulting from higher incomes and higher taxes to provide overall savings of $2 to $17. Every dollar invested in quality early care and education generates returns ranging from $2 to $17.

Within Los Angeles County, the formal early care and education industry provides jobs for more than 40,000 employees. Because these jobs cannot be moved to other areas for cost savings, the income tax revenues paid by members of this workforce stay within the state and the purchasing power gained from their salaries remains local.

Gross receipts, which measure the size of an industry in terms of the overall value of the goods and services produced over the course of a year, are estimated to be $1.7 billion in Los Angeles County and $5.6 billion in California. Gross receipts generated by the early care and education workforce are more significant than those of several other large industries in the area, including soft drink manufacturers, women's clothing stores, and spectator sports.

The implications of transforming our early care and education system cut to the core of maintaining the American dream and securing our competitive advantage in a global market place. Early care and education is a substantial and growing sector of the economy with substantial economic impact in terms of future cost savings, widespread use, consumer spending, and job creation. For additional information, please refer to our Economic Impact of the Early Care and Education Industry Brief.

The research has made clear the developmental significance of high-quality early care and education. This lasting effect on the lives of the children who participate in quality early care and education goes beyond better future outcomes in social productivity and translates to future outcomes in economic productivity. Investing in early care and education produces short- and long-term impacts on our economy.

**Economic Impact of the Early Care and Education Workforce**

**Recommendations**

Recommendations were selected based on a review of the environmental landscape of current local and state policy activity to support the early care and education workforce and an analysis of how to meaningfully advance ongoing policy efforts. The following criteria was considered in selection of the recommendations:

- Places where there is opportunity for tangible progress.
- Opportunity to leverage ongoing local and state policy efforts.
- Opportunity to better articulate the multiple benefits and impact as a means of broadening coalitions.
- Recognition of today's constrained budget environment and increased competition for public funds.

Through the CDP Project, First 5 LA will build the visibility of the early care and education workforce and work with local and state policy makers, as well as business and civic leaders, to take action on the following recommendations:

- Partner in the effort to defend against budget cuts to early care and education and safeguard child care and preschool funding.
- Support policies that promote the development of a seamless system of education from infancy through grade 12.
- Support and promote policy efforts to fund and implement QRIS and ensure inclusion of opportunities for provider advancement.
- Prepare and adopt minimum salary standards for center-based providers commensurate with established QRIS training and education requirements for provider advancement.
- Establish a commitment among advocates and policy makers to develop pay parity for center-based providers that is commensurate with kindergarten teacher salaries.
- Promote efforts to create and adopt an early care and education teaching credential for teachers working in early care and education licensed care facilities.
- Work to support and allocate funds for research-based proven workforce development preparation and training programs geared toward the professionalization of early care and education teachers.

**The CDP Project Recommendations**

- **Partner in the effort to defend against budget cuts to early care and education and safeguard child care and preschool funding.**
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- **Promote efforts to create and adopt an early care and education teaching credential for teachers working in early care and education licensed care facilities.**
- **Work to support and allocate funds for research-based proven workforce development preparation and training programs geared toward the professionalization of early care and education teachers.**
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
- Margaret Mead

Join us in effecting change. You can make a difference and get involved as we highlight the importance of the early care and education workforce and take the lead in broadening the coalition for its support and investment. There are several ways for you to engage with First 5 LA on this issue and stay connected to the movement.

Follow us on:  

Facebook: www.facebook.com/eceworks  
Twitter: @ECEWorks

First 5 LA oversees the L.A. County allocation of funds from Proposition 10, which added a 50-cent tax on tobacco products sold in California. Funds raised help pay for health care, education and child development programs for children from the prenatal stage to age five and their families. First 5 LA’s mission is to increase the number of young children who are physically and emotionally healthy, safe, and ready to learn. For more information, please visit www.first5la.org.

LACOE is a premier provider of integrated, educational programs and services, from birth to adulthood, in a richly diverse and multicultural global environment. These services include universal, quality, early childhood education, effective data driven programs for all students, and state of the art technical assistance. LACOE earns the public’s confidence by: making the school the hub of the community, making the most efficient use of financial resources, bridging the “digital divide” in technology access and content, and developing collaborative partnerships for students, parents, and community.