It is a promising time for children in California.

Our state is embarking on an historic change in how public schools are funded. Parents and community members have an important role to play in informing funding decisions by local school districts that will shape educational programs and opportunities for children.

This summer, Governor Brown led an effort that gives local school districts more discretion over their budgets, and provides additional resources that support low-income students, English Learners and foster children with the goal of helping children overall be more successful in school. This new state law, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), gives school district leaders and staff the flexibility to identify the best path to educate and support students in their districts, including investing in early childhood education programs like preschool.

First 5 LA believes this important legislation provides an opportunity to ensure young children are ready to learn. And, First 5 LA believes that parent involvement is a critical component to student success and that their engagement in the process of developing district budgets and priorities is essential.

According to the National Institute for Early Education Research, some of the benefits of investing in high-quality early education programs, such as pre-school, include:

- Students are more likely to graduate on-time from high school
- Low-income children have become more successful in school and life
- Students are less likely to have difficulty keeping up with their classmates or require special learning assistance
- Children in foster care have a greater chance of having developmental delays identified and addressed during the early years
- Young English learners experience do better in literacy and math

The Local Control Funding Formula legislation ensures that parents and community members will have a greater say than ever before in school districts’ priorities and how they spend public money.

Under the new law, school districts are required to seek out input and advice from parents as they begin to shape their own, local educational priorities. How this happens is up to the public. If community members want more say and want to hear more information about how the local school district is spending taxpayer money, it is up to us to reach out to school board members and superintendents. It is important that the local officials know the community cares about how they are spending tax money and preparing children for success.

Parents and community members can contact their local school district to inquire about their parent and community engagement process (see link below for district contact information). Some districts have already scheduled initial meetings to get parent and community feedback.
The Los Angeles Unified School District has set dates, times and locations for parent and community engagement meetings. We encourage you to attend and share your ideas with local school districts. First 5 LA will continue to post information about additional school district hearings and community meetings in LA County, as we learn about them on our website at www.first5la.org/policy/lcff.