Preschool Makes the Difference!

A Parent’s Guide to Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Funding Opportunities for Early Learning
School Funding Has Changed!

**What is Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)?**

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

$ **Base Grant:** School districts will receive a base target (or minimum amount) of $6,845 per student. It will vary based on grade level: K-3, 4-6, 7-8, and 9-12 to meet the unique needs of students.

$$ **Supplemental Grant:** Students who are low-income, English learners, and foster youth have greater needs that require more resources. School districts will receive an additional 20% of the base grant for each student who is an English learner, low-income (qualifies for free and reduced lunch) or in foster care.

$$** Concentration Grant:** School districts with 55% or more students qualifying for supplemental funding because they are English learners, low-income or in foster care will get an additional 50% of the base grant. Districts falling in this category will receive this funding on top of the 20% they will get in supplemental funds.

**How can Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) support early learning?** Over the past few years, we have seen a dramatic reduction and/or elimination of preschool programs. Parents can recommend to their school district that LCFF money be used to expand preschool opportunities for students such as:

- **Center-Based Preschool** – Traditional classroom for preschool age children.
- **Home Visitation** – Educators 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 get ready for kindergarten.
Schools are currently finalizing their budgets for this school year. Districts will decide how to use the funds, but they are required to go to parents and community members for recommendations on how to spend the money. Ask principals and board members questions about school funding like:

- 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 need? Are there any additional programs for preschool students who are low-income, English learners, or foster youth?
- How can parents be involved in developing the plan to support early learners?
- How is the district ensuring that they have quality preschool opportunities?
- How will we know the district is doing a good job in including parents in the LCFF budget decisions?

What Families Can Do

- Seek quality early learning and preschool program for your own child.
- Share this brochure with other parents and inform them about the importance of early education.
- Join a parent association, school council, or community organization that advocates 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.

By age 2, low-income children are already behind their peers in listening, counting, and other skills essential to literacy.

The Local Control Funding Formula will be sending more money to schools than ever before!
Children Who Start Ahead, Stay Ahead

Poverty is the single best predictor that a child will not do well in school. As early as 18 months, low-income children begin to fall behind in vocabulary development and other skills critical for school success. Approximately seventy-five percent of third graders with poor reading skills continue to struggle through high school, but children who start ahead, stay ahead.

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Above Poverty Threshold</th>
<th>Below Poverty Threshold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognizes all letters</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counts to 20 or higher</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writes name</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads words in a book</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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SELECTED SCHOOL READINESS SKILLS


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 to 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
A child’s path to success in school and 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 sure their child gets 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.

85% of brain growth occurs from birth to five years.

Before 3rd grade, children learn to read. After 3rd grade, children read to learn.
There are many different types of early education programs. They range from a center-based program where a child is in a traditional classroom to home visitation where an educator provides a class to a 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 if 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 8-10 children ages four – five.

- **Do teachers have the skills to support a child’s learning?** Look for a nurturing environment where 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, and participate in decision-making at the program.