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.

Before the third grade, children learn to read. After the third grade, children read to learn. Eighty-five percent of brain growth occurs from birth to age 5. A child’s vocabulary as early as age 3 can predict third grade reading achievement.

Early Learning is Important

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.

Preschool Makes the Difference!
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 in or elimination of preschool programs. Parents can recommend that their school district use the LCFF money to expand preschool opportunities for students.

- **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.

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- Workshops that help parents support their child’s learning.
- Workshops for parents and children to learn together.
- Summer programs that help families prepare for kindergarten.

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

By the age of 2, children provided with stimulating environments know as many as 1,100 words, while children without these experiences know fewer than 500 words.

**Concentration Grant**

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.

**Parents Matter Now**

www.parentsmatternow.org

**The Benefits of Preschool**

**Preschool Supports the Economy**

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

- **Early education programs promote school 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, 2013