Parents Go to Class to Learn How to Nurture Children's School Success

Graciela Gomez says her 5-year-old son, Timothy, is compassionate, smart, and friendly— and she tries to nurture his self-esteem daily so he will be ready to learn in kindergarten.

Gomez and two dozen other parents in LAUSD’s Queen Anne Place Ready for School Center in West LA went back to school themselves this summer to learn to improve their parenting skills, set realistic expectations, and reinforce positive behavior that will increase their preschoolers’ chances for academic success.

This week, First 5 LA and KTTV Fox 11 return to the Kindergarten Academy, where both kids and parents go to class to learn how to "make the grade."

Part of the weekly TV news series, "Good Beginnings" on children's early learning, health, and safety, this segment will air Thursday 8-9 a.m. and 10-11 p.m. A follow-up live studio interview on the same topic will be aired Friday 8-9 a.m.

"We emphasize that parents are their children's first and best teachers," said Deborah Johnson Hayes, an LAUSD early mental health coordinator. "If parents feel good about their ability to help their children learn, the children are likely to have confidence in their own ability to succeed."

For tips and information about this segment and the series, visit www.first5la.org.

Leading Childhood Health Experts Warn Obesity Prevention Must Start in Infancy

Leading early childhood health experts are warning that obesity prevention must begin in the earliest stages of human development.

This advice comes after a recent Harvard University study that showed a 74 percent jump in infants who are overweight, and a 59 percent rise in babies at risk of overweight.

While there isn't a standard definition of "overweight" prior to age 2, the babies studied were compared to similar populations of infants dating back to 1980.
September 21-23, 7:30 a.m.-4:45 p.m., Sunday 7:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.: Training the Early Childhood Trainer Conference at the Los Angeles Airport Marriott, 5855 W. Century Blvd., LA 90045. Registration is $310 for members, $340 for non-members by Sept. 15. One day registration is $175. Visit pda.caeyc.org.


October 7, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.: Third Annual Councilmember Wendy Gruel Child Health and Safety Fair at the Valley Plaza Recreation Center, 6451 Saint Clair Ave., North Hollywood 91606. Call Jackie Keen at (818) 352-3287.

October 7, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m.: Family Literacy Support Network's 4th Annual Family Literacy Learning Luau at the Sheraton Cerritos, 12725 Center Court Dr., Cerritos 90703. Limited registration is available at $75 by Sept. 29. Contact at Elida Garcia (562) 922-6560 or Garcia_Elida@lacoe.edu. Click here for registration form.

EVIE'S DESK

Ways to Help Children Have Positive Feelings of Self-Worth

As parents, we never question our responsibility to ensure that our children are physically healthy and safe from harm, but we may sometimes overlook the importance of mental health.

In this week's First 5 LA/KTTV Fox 11 "Good Beginnings" segments on

Children, ages 2-5, are considered overweight if their body mass index (BMI) is greater than the 95th percentile for their age, and at risk of overweight if their BMI is between the 85th and 94th percentile for their age.

In California, other studies show that about 20 percent of children, ages 2-5, are overweight or at risk. In Los Angeles County, a recent WIC study found 17 percent of 3-year-olds and 19 percent of 4-year-olds are overweight, while roughly 35 percent of 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds are at risk of being overweight.

To reduce the likelihood of having an overweight baby, expectant mothers should avoid smoking, gaining too much weight, and take steps to prevent gestational diabetes. Breastfeeding is recommended for mothers of newborns.

For more information on childhood obesity, visit www.mim.nih.gov.

New Moderated Online Message Boards Offer Guidance to Parents and Caregivers

Parents and caregivers of young children have a new place to ask questions and share knowledge about a wide range of early childhood issues.

This month, KCET launched online message boards connected with the Peabody Award-winning daily TV series, "A Place of Our Own" and "Los Nines en Su Casa," which are co-sponsored by First 5 LA.

Threads of interest on the message boards are organized by topic and easily searchable. Experienced professionals in the areas of health care, child development, and special needs moderate discussion on the boards, offering tips on best practices and resources.

The message boards cover all topic areas discussed on the television series and, like the rest of the website and series, offer separate and unique content in Spanish and English at no cost to the user.

Visit www.aplaceofourown.org or www.losninosensucasa.org

More than 2,000 Families Learn Importance of Fitness at MacArthur Park Soccerfest

More than 2,000 families from throughout Southern California gathered in MacArthur Park on a warm August Sunday to participate in Soccerfest, sponsored by the office of California Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez (D-Los Angeles).

With a focus on preventing childhood obesity, the event capitalized on the popularity of soccer among Latino families as a way to educate parents about the importance of physical fitness and exercise.

First 5 LA, along with 30 other community organizations, distributed information about children's early health and safety to hundreds of participants.
building self-esteem, we’ll see how both parents and children can get mentally ready for kindergarten success. Positive self-esteem boosts confidence that enables learning to take place. That’s why I want to remind parents about ways they can help their children maintain a sense of high self worth from early childhood:

**Tips for Building Early Self-Esteem**

1. **Help your child feel special and appreciated.** Focus on strengths rather than weaknesses and set aside special time each week alone with each of your children.

2. **Help your child to develop problem-solving and decision-making skills.** For example, when your children have difficulty, ask them to think about a couple of ways of resolving the situation and use role playing to demonstrate possible outcomes.

3. **Be empathetic, not critical.** Instead of saying, "Why don't you listen to me?" or "Why don't you use your brain?", let children know you understand they're having difficulty and problem-solve together to find an alternate approach.

4. **Provide opportunities for children to help.** By allowing them to display their competence in simple ways like setting the table or putting away toys, we give children a chance to demonstrate their worth.

5. **Be consistent in reinforcing positive behavior.** Provide regular praise for specific actions, such as "I really like the way you shared your toy with your baby sister," to encourage good behavior.

Representing **First 5 LA** were **Victor Abalos** and **Katie Kurutz** from Public Affairs, while **Mayda Echeverria** of California Hospital enrolled eligible children in free and low-cost health insurance plans.

According to the Latino Coalition for a Healthy California, more than one in three Latino children in the state are uninsured. For Information about **First 5 LA's** free and low-cost Healthy Kids insurance, call (888) First 5 LA.

**CHAMPION PROFILE**

**Children's Bureau's Alex Morales Heads Leading Child Abuse Agency in LA Area**

*Champion Profile* features individuals who exemplify **First 5 LA's** tagline, "Champions for Our Children."

Alex Morales is president and CEO of Children's Bureau, a non-profit leader in the prevention and treatment of child abuse serving Los Angeles and Orange Counties for more than 100 years.

During his 18 years with the organization, he has helped grow its outreach and budget from five sites ($6.6 million) to 22 sites ($20 million), while increasing services to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers through model programs, including family resource centers, nutrition education, and school readiness.

Morales is an advocate for legislative reform to strengthen child welfare policies, locally and statewide.

He holds a BA in physics from Cal State Long Beach and a master's degree in social work from USC.

**Which book has most influenced your life?**

*Who Will Tell the People: The Betrayal of American Democracy* by William Greider

**Which historical figure do you most admire?**

Albert Einstein, who was a creative thinker, pacifist, humanitarian, and civil rights advocate.

**What is your favorite way to spend time with an important child or children in your life?**

I love to help my children solve a challenging math/science problem or do a construction project.

**What is your idea of a perfect world?**

Where the number of people who try to make a better world grows each day.

**What is the greatest challenge faced today by children and families of LA County?**

Parents need to talk more to their children, saying closer to four million words to their young child a year, compared to the only one million words being spoken now by most parents.
**Which living person do you most admire?**
My mother, Ruth Morales, who was born in Mexico, came to the U.S., and became an engineer, math teacher, director of bilingual education, director of adult education, principal, school board member, and minister.

**What is your motto?**
"Work with one knee on the ground; you can see the children better, stay small, and always recognize that you need the help of adults around you."