

# Recommendations on Early Education and Care



California Working Families Policy Summit  
January 12, 2011

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## **Introduction**

A severe public funding crisis exists in California that directly impacts the quality of education and care for our youngest children. Children have also been impacted by a lack of priority by the state when it decides between other general fund priorities and the allocation of education and care services for our state's children. Many of our state's poorest children, a majority of them ethnic minorities, are victims of this lack of funding and policy priority. This lack of responsibility impacts children and youth of all ages as they move from early education and care to kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade and in funding for our public colleges and universities.

California cannot continue on its present course of failing to provide adequate funding for quality education and care opportunities for our state's youngest children.

## **Policy Objective #1**

**Increase funding for infants and toddler education and care.**

### ***Background***

California and the federal government provide many limited opportunities for education and care of our youngest children, but the funding is not enough for the quality programs we expect and the number of families who want and need the services.

The development of a quality workforce is also in jeopardy due to lack of funding for training and higher education opportunities.

### ***Recommended Actions***

- A. The Governor and Legislature should prioritize funding for quality care for infants and toddlers at rates that ensure quality and accessibility to parents. This means that funding rates per child should match a business model that will allow providers of these services to function and be able to attract and retain quality staff.
- B. If the Governor and Legislature decide to ask the voters for fiscal support of state government, a strong plank should be included to support quality care, preschool, and expansion of transitional kindergarten.
- C. The Governor and Legislature should ensure that all early education and care programs receive funding that provides quality and access to families that need support. This means that they need to evaluate the true costs of these quality programs for birth to 4 year olds for low income and special education children.

**Policy Objective #2**

**Provide expansion of the Kindergarten through University facility bond to include early education and care facilities.**

***Background***

Most state-provided services are funded with two types of funding: program and facilities. For instance, our public schools receive separate facility funding to build classrooms, thereby leaving their program money to fund the education that happens in the facilities.

Tens of thousands of California's poorest children lack access to preschool and care. Despite mounting evidence of the compelling benefits of quality preschool and care, California currently lacks preschool-suitable facility spaces for approximately one in five (1 in 5) of its four-year-olds. This one-in-five preschool facilities shortfall is very unevenly and inequitably distributed, with the burden falling more heavily on our state's poorest children and children of color. For example, some regions have sufficient facilities to easily serve all of their four-year-olds while many others serve less than half of their children needing services. Unfortunately, the communities with the greatest shortfalls are precisely the communities that would benefit most from early education and preparation for school: kids in poverty, kids whose parents do not speak English as their primary language, kids whose parents didn't graduate from high school, and children of color. Studies show that quality programs will work to close the achievement gap.

***Recommended Actions***

- A. California should add-on to the K through University School Facility Bond by at least \$1.2 billion for the construction of early education and care facilities.
  - 1. Eligibility for the grants would be school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools (Local Education Agencies, LEAs) offering at least K through 3 programs at the discretion of the local board and:
    - a. Serve unmet child care and preschool needs for school attendance areas where schools have an Academic Performance Index of 1, 2 or 3; and/or
    - b. Serve unmet child care and preschool needs for school attendance areas where schools serve populations above 75% on free and reduced lunch.
  - 2. LEA grants would be for up to \$400,000 for new buildings and up to \$100,000 for remodeling existing facilities converted to early care and education or, given certain circumstances, for upgrading existing facilities. The grant would be for the above amount with the LEA returning unused funds upon completion of the facility. Land and other costs above the grant would be funded by the local education agency.
  - 3. This program would not change LEA K-12 facility eligibility as it is currently calculated. In addition, LEAs would be required to use these facilities for early care and preschools developed under this program for early care and preschool for at least 15 years after the grant.
  - 4. As consistent with current law, LEAs may offer early education and care in these bond-funded facilities with their staff or may contract the services.