



Santa Clara County Early Learning Master Plan

MID-IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW

Prepared for the Santa Clara County Office of Education
with the assistance of



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LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Beginning in 2010, the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) has been the convener, facilitator, and steward of the Santa Clara County Early Learning Master Plan (ELMP). The ELMP provides a community-based vision and set of goals for the many and varied early care and education (ECE) stakeholders in the county, guiding us all towards a future where every child in the county benefits from high quality ECE that is accessible, affordable, culturally competent, and inclusive of disabled and non-disabled children alike. I am proud of the part that the SCCOE has held in moving our community into this future and am grateful for the ongoing commitment to this work from so many partners throughout Santa Clara County and beyond.

The ECE landscape in Santa Clara County has seen extraordinary change since the launch of the current plan in 2018. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacted children, families, and ECE professionals. It also demonstrated that ECE is essential for the whole community and economy, not just to the parents of young children. Elected leaders and policymakers at all levels have responded with historic investments, programmatic changes, and a deeper understanding of the challenges, benefits, and promise of universal access to high quality ECE. How should the ECE community in Santa Clara County respond to these changes and to the new challenges and opportunities they create?

Beginning in the summer of 2022, we began a process to address this question – initiating a mid-implementation review of the 2017 county-wide ELMP. Through interviews, surveys, focus groups and data analysis that reflect the SCCOE’s commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and partnership, we have revised the ELMP to address this new landscape. We have also taken the opportunity to improve the development process, intentionally including parent and provider voice and using an action-oriented framework to present what we have learned. This report, and the desired outcomes and action steps that it states, are the outcomes of this year-long process. I believe that these changes make the ELMP more equitable, more useful, and even more valuable as a guide to the work we must do together.

In closing, I want to thank the people who supported and performed this review: the ECE leaders and staff at the SCCOE, our consultants from San José State University Early Childhood Institute and American Survey Research, ECE stakeholders from school districts, community-based organizations, advocacy groups, and public agencies, and, most importantly, providers and parents who volunteered their time and expertise so that we can benefit from their lived experience.

The ELMP is our plan; of, by, and for the ECE stakeholders of Santa Clara County. I am excited to work together to realize its goals in support of children, families, ECE professionals, and everyone in our community.

Sincerely,



Dr. Mary Ann Dewan

County Superintendent of Schools

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Developing the Mid-Implementation Review

The 2017 county-wide Early Learning Master Plan (ELMP) included 28 goals developed during a 15-month stakeholder engagement process and was intended to run through 2024. Significant changes in the early learning landscape in the county over the past three years, including sequelae of the COVID-19 pandemic, the roll-out of Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) by the State of California, and a host of policy changes at all levels of government, have resulted in the need for a mid-implementation review of the ELMP. Over the past year, the SCCOE and its consultants conducted a review including a landscape scan, stakeholder interviews, focus groups with parents and early care and education (ECE) providers, and the development of a desired outcomes and suggested actions for each of the six work areas considered in the ELMP. Finally, “year one” actions and process and outcome metrics for the highest ranked action were developed and presented as a logic model for each work area.

Changes in the Early Care and Education (ECE) Landscape

There have been significant changes in the ECE landscape since the release of the ELMP in 2017. The COVID-19 pandemic created significant disruptions in ECE with potentially long-lasting consequences. These include the effects of social isolation on children’s social-emotional, physical, and academic development, as well as the effects on their caregivers from economic uncertainty and illness. There were also substantial impacts on the ECE field as many providers continued in-person operations despite financial and illness concerns while others left the field entirely. The pandemic coincided with the Black Lives Matter movement and greater awareness of systemic and institutionalized racism. This awareness was reflected within the field in discussion on disproportionate rates of exclusionary discipline, quality ratings, and racialized differences in pay within the ECE workforce. Within California, the development and release of the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care provided stakeholders with the state’s strategic vision for ECE. Governor Newsom making ECE a priority enabled a range of policy and programmatic changes, including the expansion of transitional kindergarten to all four-year-olds as part of the roll-out of UPK, significant increases in reimbursement rates, a focus on including children with disabilities, and initial movement towards funding programs based on the actual cost of quality care, rather than market rate. In Santa Clara County, these changes were accompanied by a continuing decline in the number of young children living in the county, in part due to the high cost of housing, with immediate implications for ECE programs and their predominantly low-income workforce. The need for childcare for essential workers during the pandemic spurred even greater cooperation between ECE stakeholders in Santa Clara County and encouraged county and city agencies to invest in ECE and child development systems. These changes have led to a stronger, more interconnected, and mutually aligned network of partnerships addressing the needs of children, families and ECE providers in our community. Some of the many state and local successes in ECE policy resulting from the advocacy and effort of Santa Clara County’s ECE community are called out in text boxes throughout this report to highlight the impacts of this work.



Workforce Development

Progress, Opportunities, and Challenges

The ECE workforce development system has faced significant challenges due to the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the state's rollout of UPK. These have included providers and staff leaving the field and the changes required to staff universal Transitional Kindergarten (TK). Despite this, there have been a number of advancements towards the goals outlined in the Workforce Development area of the ELMP. These include significant increases in reimbursement rates in Santa Clara County resulting from realignment between the Standard Reimbursement Rate (SRR) and the Regional Market Rate (RMR) which was implemented last year and significantly increased rates in Santa Clara that give providers room to increase wages for ECE staff. There has also been substantial state investment in workforce development, motivated in large part by the need to train staff for the rollout of universal transitional kindergarten and to backfill the positions of childcare providers who leave to work in TK. This has led to additional funding for certification programs, supports for post-secondary education, the expansion of existing professional development programs and creation of new programs to include preschool teachers (such as the Golden State Teacher Grant Program, the Early Education Teacher Grant Program, and the Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing Program Grant), the development of new certifications, and expanded professional development on early learning topics for existing teachers and administrators. There have also been expanded efforts in support of unlicensed and home-based providers, and to create apprenticeship pathways for staff coming into the field. These have been aided by increasing use of the ECE Workforce Registry by training providers and ECE professionals and by the development of infrastructure like the Early Childhood Consortium.

Desired Outcome and Recommended Action

Following the review process, the desired outcome in the Workforce Development area is **a system of career development supports for ECE professionals in all settings (FFN to TK)** and the recommended action is to **expand the Early Childhood Consortium to help all ECE educators identify educational pathways that align with their career goals, promote pathways intended for racially and linguistically diverse working professionals, and provide financial support to offset costs.**



Access

Progress, Opportunities, and Challenges

There has been significant progress in this work area with substantial state investments in the California State Preschool Program (CSPP) and Alternative Payment Program (APP) increasing the numbers of program “slots” and the expansion of TK eligibility to include all four-year-olds by 2025-26. These increases could lead to an estimated 14,000 new TK slots, 8,000 new APP vouchers, more than 300 new CSPP places, and over 40,000 students eligible for the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program ELOP. There have also been changes in eligibility with families earning up to 100% of the State Median Income (SMI) now eligible for CSPP and additional changes in 2023-24 state budget expanding eligibility further to nearly all age-eligible children, regardless of income, so long as slots are available to accommodate them. These changes, as well as data from the most recent county Childcare Needs Assessment and ECE Facilities Study, indicate a greater unmet need among children ages zero to three than preschool age now and even more in the future. CSPP programs are now required to set aside 5 percent of slots for children with disabilities, regardless of income, with that set aside planned to increase to at least 7.5 percent in 2025-26, and at least 10 percent beginning in 2026-27 per the provisions of the 2023-24 Early Childcare and Education Budget Trailer Bill, AB 116. Eligibility for childcare voucher-based programs has increased to 85 % of SMI. The new ELOP requires schools to offer a combined 9 hours of learning and care to all low-income, foster, and EL students in grades TK to 6 free of charge. ELOP creates the opportunity to braid together programs resulting in a full day of services but also creates a need for greater coordination between ECE, school, and out-of-school-time (OST) providers. These changes have led to challenges, with a lack of trained staff or licensed facilities being a relatively greater constraint on access than in the past. These have motivated efforts and funding around workforce development, facilities construction, and alignment of the various components of the mixed-delivery system leading to the opportunity to create a more cohesive mixed-delivery system for children and families.

Desired Outcome and Recommended Action

Following the review process, the desired outcome in the Access area is an **increased number of licensed slots for children ages 0 to 3** and the recommended action is to **determine and implement changes that make infant and toddler care more sustainable for providers and more accessible for low- and mid-income families.**

Program Quality

Progress, Opportunities, and Challenges

There have been significant changes to the quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) since the release of the ELMP. These have included increased numbers of providers, particularly FCCH, participating and policy changes on the implementation and focus of the system. Local efforts to address quality in license-exempt programs have been successful, as has advocacy to expand access to OST programs and to address the need for developmentally appropriate practices and assessment in TK. The expansion of TK and the rollout of ELOP should benefit from these existing efforts. CDE is updating the Preschool Foundations and Frameworks and the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) readiness assessment to align curriculum and practice across the preschool to third grade (P-3) continuum. One challenge that was particularly highlighted is the need for programs to be more inclusive of children with disabilities, and for the supports that would be needed to make that happen. In part this reflects the current state of inclusion in ECE programs and the recent set aside of CSPP slots for children with disabilities. Recent efforts to address this topic have included the state’s Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program (IEEEP) grants and successful SCCOE-led legislative advocacy to remove licensing barriers to inclusive early education (AB 2827, SB 277) and increase support for early mental health consultation. The equity focused work reflects a view that a focus on supports for children with disabilities results in quality improvements with benefits for all children.

Desired Outcome and Recommended Action

A focus on the need for programs to be better equipped to meet the needs of children with disabilities developed during the review process and is reflected in the desired outcome and recommended action in the Program Quality work area. Following the review process, the desired outcome in the Program Quality area is an **increased number of sites with access to needed special education and mental health supports** and the recommended action is to **increase inclusion of children with disabilities by expanding and coordinating access to early childhood special education and mental health professionals, resources, and other supports (for children and providers) across all care settings.**

Family Engagement

Progress, Opportunities, and Challenges

There has been continued progress in the area of Family Engagement with a number of specific successes. These have included the implementation of the Strengthening Families framework by the City of San Jose's early learning programs, the Joint Schools-ECE Family Engagement Collaborative created as part of the County of Santa Clara's Universal Access Pilot program, FIRST5 Santa Clara County's ongoing funding of Family Resource Centers (FRCs), and SCCOE's extensive Steps to Success early learning enrollment campaign. Together these efforts have helped families navigate the changes to the ECE landscape over the past few years. The rollout of UPK and associated planning grants has provided school districts with additional family engagement resources. The review process indicated a need to shift from a family engagement to a family partnership approach that emphasizes the strengths that families bring to their children's education and the need for two-way communication. In keeping with the overall emphasis on equity, and the need to support providers and families during the transition to more inclusive ECE programs, the review emphasizes focusing family partnership efforts on families of children with disabilities.

Desired Outcome and Recommended Action

A focus on the need for programs to be better equipped to meet the needs of children with disabilities developed during the review process and is reflected in the desired outcome and recommended action in the Family Engagement work area. Following the review process, the desired outcome in the Family Engagement area is an **increased number of early learning programs that enroll children with disabilities** and the recommended action is to **expand efforts to partner with families of children with disabilities by researching their needs, identifying, and expanding the number of early learning programs that are enrolling children with disabilities, and encouraging early intervention providers and special education programs within Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to align family partnership efforts across general and special education.**

Articulation, Alignment, and Data Systems

Progress, Opportunities, and Challenges

There have been a number of steps towards the goals in this work area since the release of the ELMP. SCCOE has continued to work on assigning unique identifiers to children served in its programs to connect their ECE data with subsequent school records and has been working to include ECE data and dashboards in its DataZone data warehouse. Additionally, the state will require LEAs operating CSPP programs to create a unique identifier for each student in their program beginning with the 2024-25 school year. Through its Steps to Success initiative and resource and referral department, the SCCOE has been expanding efforts to provide families with school readiness and enrollment information. The rollout of UPK has increased movement towards articulation and alignment across the mixed-delivery system and between ECE providers and schools. UPK planning and implementation grants have provided resources for LEAs to engage in outreach, planning, and collaboration with their local ECE providers. Changes to CSPP to facilitate dual enrollment with TK and the implementation of ELOP will further

support these efforts. Work to implement a common school readiness assessment (SRA) in the county continues with an ongoing dialogue, facilitated by the SCCOE, on how best to meet this need.

Desired Outcome and Recommended Action

During the review process, a focus developed on the need for training on developmentally appropriate and inclusive practices and the use of joint professional learning opportunities for ECE providers and LEA staff as a means of improving articulation and alignment. This is reflected in the desired outcome and recommended action in the Articulation, Alignment, and Data Systems work area. Following the review process, the desired outcome is **Increased capacity of staff to use developmentally appropriate practices with children with disabilities** and the recommended action is to **provide opportunities for ECE and TK-12 staff to communicate and coordinate around developmentally appropriate curricula and practices.**

Facilities

Progress, Opportunities, and Challenges

The past several years have seen some progress made towards the Facilities goals of the ELMP. This has included the Early learning Facilities Study published by the SCCOE in 2018, the inclusion of childcare facilities as a source of bonus points in the City of San Jose Housing Department's 2021 Notice of Funding Availability, and the recent decision by the County of Santa Clara to dedicate \$15 million to ECE facilities and operations grants. The State of California also funded competitive grants for non-LEA childcare providers to address minor renovation and repair needs and major renovation and construction projects through the state budget process. The results of this program highlighted both the demand for facilities funding and the need to support providers in applying for funds and executing these projects. The state has provided \$100 million in funds for LEAs to build classrooms in support of preschool and TK expansion, with a further \$550 million that were budgeted but have subsequently been delayed. The expansion of TK will cause changes in the need for, and location of, preschool facilities and will

increase the need for facilities technical assistance and other supports as providers change their program operations, and physical space, to meet the needs of younger children.



Desired Outcome and Recommended Action

Following the review process, the desired outcome in the Facilities area is an **increased number of licensed childcare facilities** in alignment with the upcoming countywide ECE Facilities Study and the recommended action is to **advocate for sustainable financial and technical supports to build and maintain developmentally appropriate and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant early learning facilities across the county's mixed delivery system.**

DEVELOPING THE MID-IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW

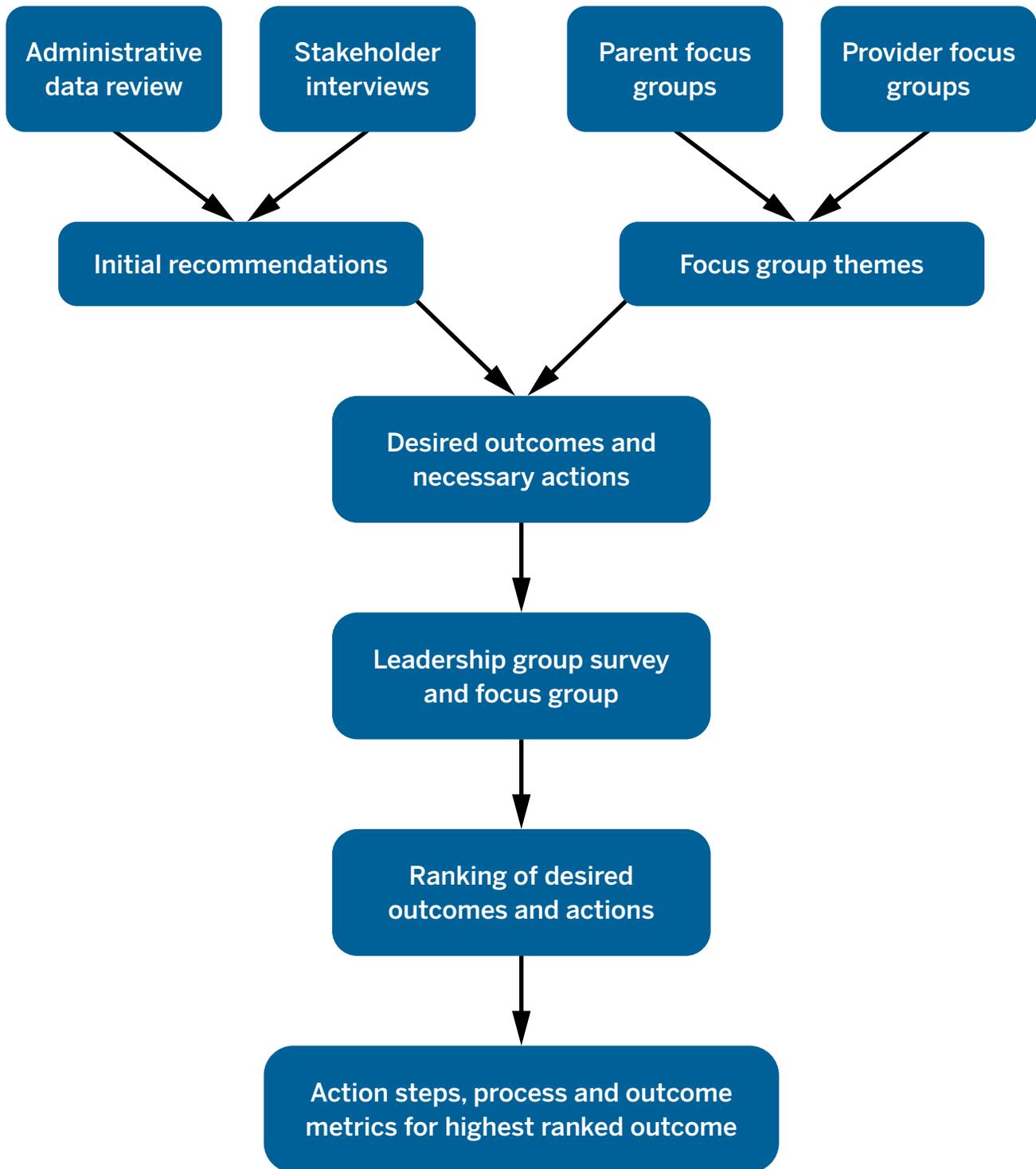
Providing equitable access to high-quality early care and education to young children and families has long been a priority for the SCCOE and its partners. In 2010, SCCOE launched its first countywide ELMP with the vision of providing every child with high-quality ECE “to the benefit of the child, their family, and our community.” The second iteration of the ELMP was designed in 2017 as an opportunity to build on progress through a strategic framework for the next seven years that included 28 goals across six priority areas: (i) Access, (ii) Articulation, Alignment, and Data Systems, (iii) Facilities, (iv) Family Engagement, (v) Program Quality, and (vi) Workforce Development.

While the ELMP timeframe is continuous through 2024, significant changes in the Santa Clara County ECE landscape have occurred since 2017, alongside disruptions brought about by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This mid-implementation review was conducted as a comprehensive effort to forecast opportunities and challenges created by these changes. For each goal area, recommendations for steps to achieve the goals identified in the 2017 ELMP, including areas for advocacy, re-prioritization or other adjustments to the ELMP goals, and suggested activities to maximize new opportunities, are provided.

The mid-implementation review development process included a number of stages to ensure its fidelity to the SCCOE principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and partnership. Following an initial planning effort in partnership with the SCCOE, the Early Childhood Institute (ECI) at San José State University (SJSU) met with a total of 18 leaders and stakeholders representing various perspectives on early care and education in Santa Clara County, many of whom participated in the 2017 ELMP development effort. Through a series of semi-structured interviews, ECI assessed progress towards the goals identified in the 2017 ELMP, challenges that have impeded progress, and new opportunities that have emerged in light of recent changes to the EL landscape. Interview transcriptions and notes were then reviewed and coded in an iterative process of listing, organizing, and sorting data to synthesize response trends within each priority area. The team worked with the SCCOE to review existing administrative data to identify progress and remaining challenges in meeting the goals set out by the 2017 ELMP. These efforts led to a set of initial recommendations.

In an overlapping process, staff from American Survey Research (ASR) held focus groups with parents of young children in English and Spanish, the parents of young children with disabilities, and center- and home-based early learning providers to gather their input on challenges and opportunities for the field in Santa Clara County. These steps were intended to ensure that parent and provider voice was included in the review and recommended actions. Themes from these focus groups were combined with the initial recommendations from the interviews conducted by ECI to create a set of desired outcomes and associated necessary actions for each area of work. These were reviewed and ranked using a survey and subsequent focus group of key leaders and stakeholders. Focus group members, staff from ASR, and SCCOE staff then determined appropriate action steps, process metrics, and outcomes measures for the highest ranked action in each work area. These components are presented as a logic model to achieve the desired outcome for each work area and in a Sample Evaluation Plan as an appendix at the end of this report.

Development Process Graphic



CHANGES IN THE ECE LANDSCAPE (2017-PRESENT)

The ECE landscape has undergone momentous shifts since the release of the 2017 ELMP. This mid-implementation report is intended to build upon the 2017 ELMP and align with existing ECE initiatives in the county. The remainder of this section reviews Santa Clara County's early learning system within each of the 2017 ELMP six priority areas (access, articulation, facilities, families, quality, and workforce). Each section begins with a presentation of the EMLP 2017 goals followed by a report of progress and challenges faced in reaching the 2017 goals. Then key opportunities that have arisen since the development of the 2017 ELMP are reviewed, highlighting new early learning initiatives, resources, and partnerships across the county. Recommendations are provided to support progress towards and/or reframing of priority areas in response to changes in the public policy and ECE landscape. This section of the report introduces some key events and changes at the national, state, and local level that have had significant effects on the ECE field and the professionals within it.

World & National Landscape: COVID-19 Pandemic

The world has changed due to the sudden and evolving effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The risks and consequences of infection involved with formerly mundane decisions like whether to attend (or mask up for) a large event in an enclosed space, whether to travel by air, and whether to schedule an in-person doctor's appointment now prompt individualized consideration. For the nation's children, use of preventative and other health care services declined during the pandemic, and the long-term developmental effects of growing up in the age of COVID-19 remain to be seen¹. No matter the extent of the social, emotional, and academic downstream effects of the pandemic on children, children as old as first, second, and even third graders, as of this writing, have little if any conscious memory of life before COVID.

The ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been broad and have deeply altered the ECE field. Temporary program closures in Spring 2020 followed by expensive COVID-19 mitigation protocols have weakened an already fragile childcare system. President Biden temporarily instilled some optimism about the infusion of federal funding into the system, but that hope for transformative change at the national level remained largely unfulfilled. In California, community-based ECE programs are facing risks of permanent closure due to pandemic-related income losses and as described below, to the anticipated movement of four-year-olds to TK as part of the state's ambitious UPK rollout. The COVID-19 pandemic has defined three of the five years since the ELMP was published in January

THE ECE WORKFORCE

ECE providers were among the first professionals asked to face the uncertainties and fear that ran high in the early days of the pandemic. Childcare providers were considered essential from the start when the children of healthcare providers and other emergency personnel needed care outside the home. Many other professionals, including TK-12 teachers, were given the opportunity to work from home, where they could continue being paid while attending to the news, checking in on family and friends, and perhaps wiping down their groceries. Meanwhile, childcare providers were either in the field scrambling to understand and acquire protective equipment or navigating layoffs and unemployment. Unknown numbers of individual providers chose to retire early or to switch fields in search of employment with some combination of higher pay and lower COVID-19 exposure risk. The pandemic raised awareness of both the essential role played by ECE providers and the fragility of the systems supporting them. Some of that increased awareness may have helped move the needle on short- and long-term investments in the systems that we have seen, and that will be discussed below, although much work remains to be done.



2018, and has consumed the attention of ECE leaders and professionals as they addressed the urgent need to protect the physical health and safety of children. The ways in which the pandemic has disrupted the field are referred to throughout this report.

World & National Landscape: Racial Reckoning

“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” - Martin Luther King, Jr.

The murder of George Floyd by police officers in Minneapolis in May 2020 represented a significant, but by no measure unique, reminder and realization of the intense, unresolved struggle for racial justice in the United States. Protests against police brutality were widespread and calls to action were raised to defund the police, or at least to question their universal authority. The severity of the case, the availability of video footage, and the means to share it on social media platforms no doubt heightened awareness of the event and fueled the #BlackLivesMatter movement². While the lives of many other Black men and women were prematurely lost prior to and after George Floyd’s death, the early 2020s will be marked in history as a pivotal time in the movement towards racial justice.

The repeating history of the loss of Black lives highlighted that the systemic sources of oppression could no longer be ignored. While racial bias and disparities in preschool discipline had already been recognized by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, whose 2016 joint statement³ on the issue was signed by 30 national organizations, the reality of preschool expulsion and its connection to anti-Black racism gained wider recognition in the wake of George Floyd’s murder. Conversations have proliferated around addressing anti-Blackness and manifestations of racial bias impacting children in the early care and education system. These conversations have reached members of the public and the ECE profession through social media postings, traditional news stories, and informational webinars. In California, the issue of disproportionate suspension and expulsion of young children of color was addressed in part through legislation⁴, which coupled the elimination of expulsion from state preschool and childcare programs with a parallel emphasis on early childhood mental health services. Locally, strong advocacy for this legislation included distribution in April 2022 of an AB 2806 advocacy toolkit developed through a partnership between Black Men for Educational Equity, the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, the SCCOE, and Kidango⁵. There is, of course, more work needed to address racial injustices.

While attempting to address these issues of racism impacting children, the ECE field is also grappling with ways to identify and address the ways in which racism manifests against Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) providers within the complex, mixed delivery ECE system. The state’s QRIS is a key example. In August 2020, advocates led by the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network, Parent Voices CA, and the Child Care Law Center argued that, among other issues, “the state’s promotion of childcare centers with higher QRIS ratings to parents may unfairly harm primarily Black owned and operated centers that cannot afford the required upgrades.”⁶ A recent national study found lower rates of QRIS participation among center-based providers in communities with a higher majority of Black residents⁷, revealing that work remains to be done to ensure that voices from predominantly Black and Brown communities are authentically represented in a system that is meant to be universally supportive. The California Master Plan for Early Learning (described next) acknowledged the need for Quality Counts California (QCC) to be redesigned to better address equity and to align with changes in the field.

THE ECE WORKFORCE

Among the ripple effects of this racial reckoning has been an increased awareness of institutionalized racism across the ECE system. Organizations like the Equity Research Action Coalition⁸ and, locally, the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE)⁹ at the University of California, Berkeley, have vividly documented for us the long history in the United States of women of color caring for white families' children for little to no financial compensation. Tracing the roots of Black caregivers to slave ownership reminds us that Black women, and more recently immigrant women of color, have served as underappreciated and underpaid caregivers for far too long. Despite the broader recognition of the need for worthy wages for ECE professionals, this need has not been met.

State of California: Master Plan for Early Learning

Between November 2019 and December 2020, a statewide team coordinated by WestEd developed the California Master Plan for Early Learning and Care¹⁰. As indicated in the 2020 report, “The Master Plan translates California’s aspirations into an actionable roadmap, building forward to address the unique challenges and circumstances experienced in 2020” with a mission of creating a “California for All Kids through a truly equitable early learning and care system.” The plan laid out four policy goals and actions:

1. Unify and strengthen programs and services to support children’s learning and development.
2. Support children’s learning and development by enhancing educator competencies, incentivizing and funding career pathways, and implementing supportive program standards.
3. Unify funding to advance equity and opportunity.
4. Streamline early childhood governance and administration to improve equity.

The areas of shared focus between the 2017 ELMP and the 2020 CA Master Plan are plentiful, as both have goals around increased paid family leave, identifying strategies for financially supporting the ECE system through rate adjustments and facilities funding, supporting ECE data integration, and providing parents with ways to access information about program availability and eligibility. As some of the tenets of the CA Master Plan continue to move forward, both state and local agencies will need to be adaptive and ready for collaboration across levels (e.g., data sharing and governance).

Notably, the CA Master Plan highlighted the need to streamline family eligibility and enrollment across public programs and create a simplified and more child- and family-focused system of care (i.e., “no wrong door”), particularly in the context of care for infants and toddlers (Goal 1). In support of this goal, the CA Master Plan includes all ECE and care programs to be under the administrative umbrella of the CA Department of Social Services (CDSS) with some notable exceptions for three aspects of the ECE system that remain under the purview of the CA Department of Education (CDE), namely, CSPP, After School Education and Safety (ASES), and preschool services for young children with disabilities (children served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B, Section 619). While CDE has oversight over the CSPP, the program is administered through a range of agency types, including childcare centers and Family Child Care Home Education Networks (FCCHEN) licensed by CDSS.

As discussed below, UPK has created opportunities for community-based programs, including those who receive public funds, to increase their coordination with LEAs. Such coordination could particularly help leverage the strengths of community-based programs for serving four-year-olds. LEA-provider partnerships are also part of the UPK framework for providing extended care for young school children whose families need a full day of care for their children. These partnerships require bridging across programs administered and funded under both CDE and CDSS.

EL programs for three- and four-year-olds have undergone massive shifts, with the CA Master Plan providing a key backdrop. As a means for aligning and strengthening existing preschool programs (Goal 1), the plan called for

implementation of “programmatically reforms of the existing CSPP and TK to create a unified state preschool program with common standards—including teacher qualifications, ratios and class sizes, and professional learning—to ensure that California delivers a preschool experience that truly supports kindergarten readiness and later school success.” Further, a phased-in universal preschool program for four-year-olds was proposed, building on TK and highlighting the need for equity by “using a targeted geographic universalism approach. To the extent possible, prioritize expansion first for four-year-olds in the attendance area of high-poverty elementary schools in school districts and charter schools that receive Local Control Funding Formula Concentration Grant funds.” Ultimately, the state proceeded with a universal TK approach, expanding TK eligibility across all districts, but without this explicit focus on addressing equity gaps.

The CA Master Plan included a broad and explicit focus on ensuring that services are culturally and linguistically responsive and meet the needs of children with disabilities. This theme of inclusion is echoed through goals around equitable access to learning and care for all, workforce training and development, and enhanced data systems. Regarding workforce, the plan calls for addressing equity through requiring “specialized training and development to address dual language development, children with disabilities, and how to eliminate bias and inequitable practices.” One way this goal has been manifested is through the PK-3 ECE Specialist Instruction Credential¹¹, adopted October 2022. This credential specifies standards for teacher preparation programs that address diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as Teacher Performance Expectations (TPEs) that teacher candidates will master around supporting dual language learners and including students with identified disabilities in the classroom. To advance equity and opportunity associated with funding for ECE (Policy Goal 3), the CA Master Plan called for a unified tiered reimbursement rate structure that takes into account the cost and quality of care. The proposed rate structure could be phased in over time and could accommodate enhancements such as cost of living adjustments, increased compensation tied to professional development, and incentives to provide care for designated groups including children with disabilities and those in need of nonstandard hours of care. Subsequently, the state established the Rate and Quality Workgroup¹² “to assess the methodology for establishing reimbursement rates and the existing quality standards for childcare and development and preschool programs and to make related recommendations.” The Workgroup brought together representatives from across the mixed delivery system between January and August 2022 to inform recommendations for rate and quality reform. The vision of the workgroup was aligned with the goal laid out by the CA Master Plan to create a single reimbursement rate structure that addresses quality standards for equity and accessibility while supporting positive learning and developmental outcomes for children. Critically, the workgroup explicitly acknowledged and addressed the systemic racism and sexism inherent in ECE policies and funding and applied an equity lens in its cost model description and policy recommendations. To inform public rate setting, the workgroup developed a cost model to reflect the true cost of providing quality care. The workgroup incorporated costs for inclusion supports and for serving dual language

learners in this cost model, demonstrating attention to the diverse needs of California’s families. A living wage was used as the floor of proposed wage scales, and factors such as paid professional development support, planning time, and paid time off were incorporated into calculations. The workgroup’s report details the investments that would be necessary to close gaps between the Cost of Quality, the Standard Reimbursement Rate (SRR) and the Regional Market Rate (RMR) for varied types of ECE programs including Title 5 and Title 22 centers, licensed family childcare home (FCCH), and unlicensed “family, friends, and neighbors” (FFN) providers¹³. It remains to be seen whether and how the state chooses to implement the recommendations of the group; full implementation would be both expensive and transformative.



THE ECE WORKFORCE

Supporting the ECE workforce was a prominent focus of the CA Master Plan for Early Learning, reflected in Policy Goal 2: “Support children’s learning and development by enhancing educator competencies, incentivizing and funding career pathways, and implementing supportive program standards.” As part of its framework around educator competencies, the Master Plan called for the expansion of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing’s work to early education, and the creation of a Pre-K–3 Early Learning and Care teaching credential. These goals have progressed in two ways. First, the Commission joined the state’s federal Preschool Development Grant-Renewal (PDG-R) in 2019¹¹ to promote implementation of the ECE TPEs and Program Guidelines¹⁴ within institutions of higher education that prepare professionals working with children from birth to age 5, at the teacher level of the permit. Similarly, the recently adopted PK-3 ECE Specialist Instruction Credential incorporates TPEs and preparation program guidelines designed to ensure that credentialed teachers are prepared to meet the needs of diverse young learners from age 3 to 8 years¹⁰. In parallel, the Master Plan called for the provision of alternative and accessible workforce preparation pathways, financial support for teachers to pursue workforce development pathways, and, in the longer term, linking the reimbursement rate structure to increased workforce competencies. Like the rest of the ECE system, educator preparation is multifaceted, and the Master Plan (Goal 2) called for revision of workforce standards across settings, including FFN homes, Licensed FCCH and Centers, and TK classrooms. This breadth of focus reflects a growing recognition of FFN’s role¹⁵ in the caregiving landscape and the need to hear their perspectives and provide them with appropriate supports¹⁶.

State of California: Implementing Universal PreKindergarten (UPK)

The implementation of UPK led to historic state investments in ECE, expansion of existing programs and implementation of new programs, migration of some ECE programs from CDE to CDSS, and changes in program eligibility and funding calculations. It will take time and diligent effort by partners to implement these changes, address any unintended impacts, and provide equitable access to quality ECE for all children and families.

In 2020-21, in the midst of the challenges of COVID-19 and unexpected budget surpluses, the state of California, led by Governor Gavin Newsom prioritized funding for TK-12 and Community colleges and raised the minimum annual Proposition 98 funding by 31.8% (\$22.5 billion)¹⁷. This was the “largest upward revision” in the history of Proposition 98. In the subsequent state budget year (2021-22), following on the heels of the release of the CA Master Plan for Early Learning and Care, California made history by investing in the largest publicly funded ECE system in the nation through UPK¹⁸. UPK includes (i) expansion of TK to provide universal access for all four-year-olds by Academic Year 2025-2026, (ii) expansions to CSPP, which will continue to be administered by CDE, to increase access to inclusive public programs for 3-year-olds from low-income families and for children with disabilities, (iii) creation of the new ELOP to provide after-school and intersession care and programming for children in grades TK-6, and (iv) continuing to expand other state programs to meet the goal of 200,000 additional childcare slots by 2025-26. More detail on ELOP is provided below. In support of these efforts, the 2021–22 state budget included \$200 million in UPK Planning and Implementation Grants for school districts, charter schools, and County Offices of Education, to develop plans to provide full-day learning programs the year before kindergarten for all children in their attendance area. This funding explicitly stressed the need for LEAs to partner with the full range education and care providers in their communities including ASES program providers, state preschool contract holders, Head Start programs, and other community-based ECE programs. Developing these partnerships requires significant expertise and the SCCOE, in partnership with the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) have developed an array of resources on UPK implementation for families, LEAs, and ECE providers (available at <https://www.sccoe.org/resources/upk>) and a UPK database tool that provides suggested blending, braiding, and layering funding options based on each LEAs unique circumstances (available at <https://ccee-ca.org/>)



[universal-prekindergarten-upk](#)). Taken together, it is evident that the intentions of CDE for UPK were to facilitate partnerships between LEAs and other ECE providers in the community. The investment into UPK for all four-year-olds in the state is undoubtedly the most remarkable outcome thus far of the Master Plan.

In addition to expanding existing programs, UPK includes implementation of a new program: ELOP¹⁹. ELOP allocated funding to school districts to expand the availability of before school, after school, summer, and inter-session care for unduplicated students in TK through 6th grade. This program provides “wrap” care for children, extending program participation for eligible children to nine hours of care for every school day and for at least 30 non-school days during extended breaks. This funding recognizes the needs of families to access childcare outside of the school day, an issue that is particularly important for parents of younger children. Funding for UPK Planning and for ELOP was made available to LEAs to facilitate the development or expansion of services for full-day extended learning and care. Each of these investments reflected opportunities for LEAs to prepare for providing services for young children and their families. Critically, these new or expanded initiatives all came about simultaneously and in the midst of the global pandemic, during which school leaders were already stretched thin by facing unprecedented public health challenges and persistent teacher and staff shortages. Effective rollout of UPK will require ongoing support, coordination, and collaboration among all the stakeholders.

While the bulk of funding for UPK planning and implementation is allocated to LEAs, the state has also provided funds for non-LEA EL stakeholders. Local Early Education Planning Councils (LPCs) will be provided with their own UPK Planning Grants to support planning and implementation of UPK for community-based providers. Funds have also been allocated for additional spaces in CSPP, General Childcare (CCTR), and the APP and CalWORKs childcare programs (voucher-based childcare for eligible families). The Infrastructure Grants Program has provided facilities renovation and repair grants for non-LEA center- and home-based licensed childcare providers, and reimbursement rates and adjustment factors for CSPP and CCTR providers have also been increased. These funds, and associated changes in program regulations are intended to strengthen the system, address ongoing inequities in access to care, and ease the transition to a mixed delivery system in which many of the four-year-old children currently served in fee-paying and subsidized preschool centers will transition into TK classrooms. SCCOE has shared information about UPK to community-based programs²⁰ including suggestions and supports for connecting with their local school districts to engage in ELOP services, and for adapting to UPK changes by planning to serve younger children or to operate during non-traditional hours.

State of California: Inclusive ECE

According to the latest available federally reported data (Dept of Ed, 2023)³⁶, just under 27% of young children with disabilities (ages 3-5, not in kindergarten) in California spend any time in a regular ECE program, with most of these children receiving services in a segregated setting (e.g., a separate class, separate school, or another clinical location). This figure places California second-to-last in terms of early childhood inclusion, as measured as a percentage of young children with disabilities who spend any time in a general education program, compared to all other reported states and territories. This data suggests that California is not routinely serving children in the appropriate least restrictive environment (LRE), a mandate of the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) of 2004. In response to the call for inclusion advanced by the CA Master Plan and other advocacy efforts, TK, CSPP and ELOP investments within the LEA systems have emphasized meeting the diverse needs of children, including those with disabilities. UPK planning documents²¹ required LEAs to detail how the programs would be designed to be inclusive and who would be involved in the process. In addition to expanding the age range eligible for CSPP, CSPP providers are now mandated to set aside slots (5%, increasing to 10%) for children with disabilities (i.e., those eligible to receive special education services through an individualized education program [IEP]) regardless of income eligibility). Additionally, pursuant to the requirements of the IDEA, the state has made clear the expectation that extended service programs, such as ELOP, be equally accessible for students with and without disabilities. The emphasis on planning for the inclusion of children with disabilities reflects the recommendations from the 2015 Statewide Task Force for Special Education’s report²² that highlighted the importance of establishing systems that address the needs of all students in California’s public schools. The state has also provided funding through the Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program (IEEEP) for additional professional development, specialized equipment, and facilities renovation to increase the accessibility of ECE programs for children with disabilities.

Santa Clara County: Updated Snapshot of the County

Building on the efforts of the ELMP 2017 landscape analysis, the following provides a brief update on the ECE community in Santa Clara County. As projected, the number of children ages 0-5 years old has continued to decrease significantly – of the nearly 2 million residents in Santa Clara County, over 125,000 are children ages 0-5 (down nearly 10% from 2018).

Figure 1. Number of children ages 0-5 years in Santa Clara County.

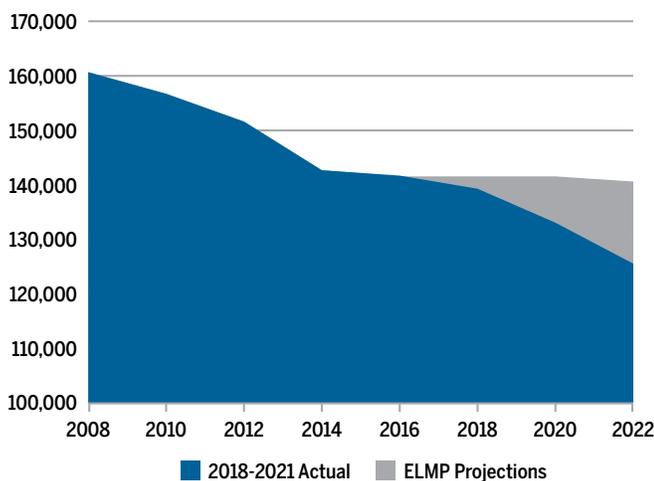
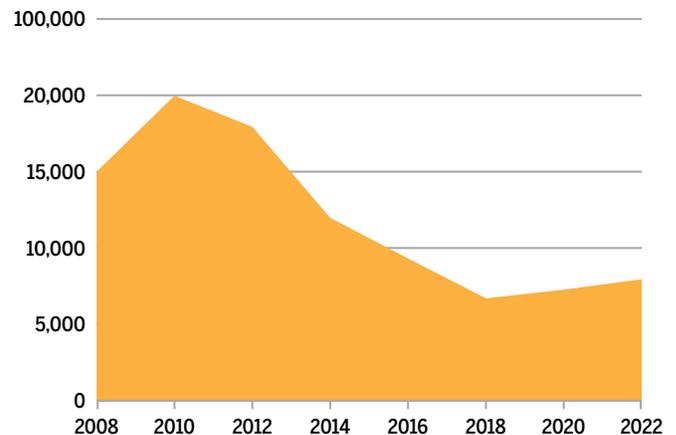


Figure 2. Number of children living in poverty in Santa Clara County.



Nearly 8,000 children (accounting for just over 6% of Santa Clara County families) are currently living in poverty. While the proportion of families living in poverty has increased by nearly 20% since 2018, poverty rates remain far below levels cited prior to 2014 (peaking at 20,000 in 2010 and 18,000 in 2012).

Approximately 40,000 children in the county are enrolled in licensed childcare centers, and nearly 15,000 are enrolled in FCCH. In total, this accounts for approximately half of the 0-5 population in Santa Clara County. Challenges in assessing unmet need (noted in the ELMP 2017) continue to surface in this mid implementation review. It is particularly difficult to account for discrepancies between licensed capacity (based on physical space) and operational capacity (which is impacted by staffing shortages). These figures also do not account for unlicensed childcare slots, including FFN networks (see also section on Access below).

Santa Clara County: Housing and Cost of Living Increases

Both housing prices and rental costs took a sharp upward turn nationwide after the onset of the pandemic²³, fueled by supply chain problems and increased cost for housing-related commodities like steel and lumber. In San José, this translated to an approximately 60% increase in house prices from pre-pandemic averages to mid-pandemic highs²⁴. Rental rates, meanwhile, increased by approximately 9% over the same two years, on average, in San José²⁵. While home prices in the Bay area remain out of reach for many families, this trend may start to turn²⁶. Due to the high costs of living in the county, families have had to consider moving to more affordable regions. A survey²⁷ of likely voters in Santa Clara and San Mateo County conducted by Choose Children 2022 and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation found dire patterns for families: 86% of San Mateo County voters with children under 5 and 79% of Santa Clara County voters with children under 5 are not confident that future generations, such as their children or grandchildren, will be able to afford to live in their community. In both counties, the majority of parents and of voters under age 50 reported they are seriously considering moving out of the Bay Area in the next few years. Across the county, these relocation trends in combination with declining birth rates have contributed to declining enrollments in schools.

THE ECE WORKFORCE



The cost of housing, which has skyrocketed since the development of the 2017 ELMP, creates economic hardship for both families with young children and the chronically underpaid ECE workforce. Many licensed home- and center-based ECE providers have closed over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the California Resource and Referral Childcare Portfolio, in 2019 (the last data before the pandemic) there were 2,103 licensed childcare sites in Santa Clara County. As of writing, the SCCOE Resource and Referral Department reports 1,977 active licensed sites, a decline of 6%.

Santa Clara County: Agencies and Organizations

While there have been some significant challenges impacting the field since 2017, there have also been notable changes at the county level that present new opportunities in the ECE landscape. The ECE community in Santa Clara County has a long history of partnership, with a robust network of agencies and organizations developing innovative programs and initiatives, as highlighted by the number of partners included in the development of the ELMP (see Table 1). There have been some notable changes to the systems of support for ECE providers and updates within agencies and organizations since the ELMP was initially completed.

One significant change was in 2020, when the state contract for Resource and Referral (R&R) services²⁸ contact moved to the SCCOE. R&R serves two major functions: (1) connecting families to childcare and (2) supporting early learning and care providers. The shift in R&R to SCCOE has strengthened and streamlined support for families and providers. This strengthening proved crucial during the early days of the COVID pandemic when the R&R was able to leverage the resources of the SCCOE and other partners to distribute funding, personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, and public health information directly to the 2,000 licensed childcare providers in the county. Having R&R within the SCCOE also allows greater coordination with other SCCOE ECE programs and supports including UPK planning and implementation, the California Preschool Instructional Network professional development program (CPIN), the Strong Start initiative, and the Steps to Success campaign²⁹, which was launched with funding support from the Morgan Family Foundation and Silicon Valley Community Foundation, with the vision of increasing enrollment and regular attendance in ECE programs across the county.

Other changes have included the County Santa Clara hiring its first Chief Children's Officer to lead the Office of Children and Families Policy, and the development of an annual County of Santa Clara Children's Budget³⁰ which details the County's spending on programs serving children and families. Recently the City of San José developed a Master Plan for Children and Youth, detailing the City's plans to serve its youngest residents, to be released before the end of the current fiscal year. The City has also specifically included incorporating childcare facilities into its Affordable Housing Notice of Funding Availability. All these steps demonstrate that the awareness of the importance of ECE created at the onset of the pandemic is being manifested in programmatic and policy changes in these large public agencies.



Table 1. Santa Clara County Partners for Early Learning

| 2017 Early Learning Master Plan Sponsors | |
|--|---|
| Santa Clara County Office of Education* | Local Early Ed Planning Council Santa Clara County* |
| FIRST 5 Santa Clara County* | Santa Clara County School Boards Association |
| Silicon Valley Community Foundation* | Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits |
| Planned Parenthood | The Silicon Valley Organization |
| Kids in Common | |
| 2017 ELMP Workgroup Member Organizations | |
| American Leadership Forum | Mission College |
| Bright Horizons | Mountain View-Whisman School District |
| California Alliance of African American Educators | Oak Grove School District |
| California Young World* | Pacific Oaks College |
| Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County | Palo Alto Community Child Care |
| Children’s Center at Google | Parent Teacher Association (Sixth District) |
| City of San José/San José Public Library* | San José City College |
| Congregation Beth Am | San José State University* |
| County of Santa Clara* | Santa Clara County Library District |
| Community Care Licensing, CDSS | Santa Clara County Office of Education* |
| Community Child Care Council of Santa Clara County | Santa Clara County School Boards Association |
| Eduvative Thinking | Silicon Valley Community Foundation* |
| Family Engagement Institute | Silicon Valley Social Ventures |
| FIRST 5 Santa Clara County* | Somos Mayfair |
| Franklin McKinley School District* | Stanford University, Bing Nursery School |
| Gavilan College | Stanford University, Department of Pediatrics |
| Go Kids* | Stanford University, Graduate School of Education |
| Grail Family Services* | Strong Start Coalition* |
| International Children Assistance Network | Sunnyvale School District |
| Kidango* | The Health Trust |
| Low Income Investment Fund | UCB Center for the Study of Child Care Employment |
| | WestEd* |

*Representatives from these organizations provided input for the ELMP mid-implementation review.

MID-IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW

Access

2017 Early Learning Master Plan: Access Goals

1. Expand Local Funding for ECE Services
2. Enroll All Eligible Children in Transitional Kindergarten (TK)
3. Increase Access to State Preschool Programs
4. Increase Access to Infant-Toddler Care and Paid Family Leave

Progress and Updates

Across this priority area, approaches have shifted considerably due to the release of the CA Master Plan for Early Learning and Care, UPK rollout, the reorganization of programs under the CDE and CDSS, and the COVID-19 pandemic. While the aspirational goal of passing a local, sustainable ECE funding stream (Goal 1) has not yet come to fruition, California has made historic state-wide investments that bolster aspects of the county's mixed-delivery system of early learning and care. Following the release of the CA Master Plan in 2019 and the state's investment in UPK, Santa Clara County has tapped into new resources to enroll all eligible children in TK (Goal 2) with demonstrable progress. To align with projected TK roll out, the specific enrollment milestones delineated in the ELMP will necessarily be shifted.

To increase stable access to childcare among lower income families in the region, the county launched the SCC Child Care Subsidy Pilot Project in Sept 2016 (Goal 3). In 2018, the CDE authorized the county to increase the family eligibility income threshold from 70% to 85% of the state median income (SMI) and to extend the eligibility period to 24 months.³¹ These pilot flexibilities have subsequently been incorporated into the ongoing operations of the state preschool program and, most recently as part of the implementation of UPK, families earning 100% of SMI are eligible for CSPP.³²

Since 2021, California has committed to add more than 200,000 slots in its CCTR, CSPP, and APP subsidized ECE programs.

Both the expansion of TK and CSPP mandates include an emphasis on providing inclusive services for young children with disabilities, although only the CSPP mandate includes a specific mechanism to achieve this goal (i.e., holding 10% of slots for children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) by 2025-26). Addressing

The 2023-24 State Budget included a provision to extend the Santa Clara County Child Care Subsidy Pilot Project until July 1, 2024.

issues related to access for children with disabilities was not highlighted in this 2017 ELMP priority area, but attention must be given to this issue to ensure that the evolving ECE landscape provides equitable and inclusive services for these children. This will require interagency coordination of services to ensure that children with disabilities are able to access services in the natural environment to the maximum extent possible.

Based on SCC school districts' initial reporting, LEAs are planning a variety of service delivery models for TK and UPK (see Table 2). The majority will be offering full day TK. As they consider the diversity of the specific families in the district, 25% have elected to implement dual language TK classrooms. Some districts plan to offer TK at all school sites for ease of access, while others will limit TK to a few sites and expand it as demand and enrollment grows.

Table 2. Santa Clara County Transitional Kindergarten Programming (28 Districts Reporting)

| All Sites | Some Sites | Full Day | Part Day | [Both] | Dual Language |
|------------|------------|------------|-----------|----------|---------------|
| 39.3% (11) | 46.4% (13) | 71.4% (20) | 10.7% (3) | 7.1% (2) | 25% (7) |

With regards to plans for other prekindergarten programs, districts vary in their plans, with expanded TK (ETK, 39%) and CSPP Dual language models (39%) being most commonly planned. Few plans include standalone Head Start or locally funded preschool programs. The implementation of CSPP programs is in flux, as some districts plan to expand, and others to reduce, CSPP sites.

Table 3. Santa Clara County LEA Plans for CSPP and ETK Programming (28 Districts Reporting)

| Offering ETK | CSPP Stand Alone | CSPP/TK Combo | CSPP Dual Language | Head Start Stand Alone | Locally Funded Preschool |
|--------------|------------------|---------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 39.3% (11) | 21.4% (6) | 10.7% (3) | 39.3% (11) | 3.6% (1) | 3.6% (1) |

| Plan to Expand CSPP | Plan to Reduce CSPP | Plan to Apply for CSPP |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| 21.4% (6) | 7.1% (2) | 7.1% (2) |

Increasing access to ECE for infants and toddlers (Goal 4) remains a priority in the county. While CSPP funding can now be used to serve younger children and additional investments have been made for subsidized infant/toddler care, the county is at a point of transition in terms of increasing the availability of programming for the birth- to 3-year-old population.

There has been modest progress in families' access to paid family leave (Goal 4). While California was the first state to pass legislation requiring the Paid Family Leave (PFL) program in 2002, data shows that relatively affluent families are more likely to be able to afford living on a set proportion of their income. In an effort to make PFL more accessible to lower-income workers, the state extended paid family leave from 6 to 8 weeks (as of 2019)³³ and recently passed legislation in Fall 2022 to increase the proportion of income that low-income families can receive for 8 weeks of paid leave, beginning in 2025. Governor Newsom supported these adjustments as an "important step to ensure more low-wage workers, many of them women and people of color, can access the time off they've earned while still providing for their family."³⁴

Income thresholds have increased so that families making less than 100% of the SMI (\$113,000 for a family of four) are eligible for CSPP and families making less than 85% of SMI are eligible for childcare subsidies.

Challenges

Partners reinforced that in order to increase access across the mixed delivery system, workforce challenges need to be addressed. There is an overarching need to recruit and retain qualified staff who are ready to provide responsive ECE to young children within their setting, and a simultaneous need for financial resources to pay these staff living/professional wages for their work. Some publicly funded programs are operating under capacity. Programs shifting to increased infant/toddler care will need to hire more staff to serve the same number of children, due to meeting critical teacher-to-infant ratio requirements. Meanwhile, SCCOE's Department of Educator Preparation Programs estimates that 607 credentialed TK teachers will be needed by AY25-26 when universal TK is fully implemented, and that the county will need an additional 443 TK teachers to reach that need. The ECE field had previously evolved from advocating for access through "more slots" to a recognition that "access and quality" need to go hand in hand.

TK expansion will create 15,000 new, free ECE slots for four-year-olds in Santa Clara County

Given the pace of the universal TK rollout, some public schools may not be ready to fully implement expanded TK in the timeframe set out by the state (Goal 2). Readiness on the part of schools could be challenged due to teacher shortages, facilities constraints, and other issues. Partners noted that, in some communities, schools may face hesitation by parents who do not yet feel comfortable sending their four-year-old children to elementary school; family input, such as in the form of community advisory groups, could increase

awareness of local community resources and needs. Districts further need to plan the use of sites and classrooms by differing programs and coordinate multiple funding streams to support the provision of nine hours of extended care, which is a complex endeavor. While LEAs have had the opportunity to apply for UPK planning grants, it remains to be seen how effectively they will be able to translate those plans into the provision of services over time.

The long-standing need for infant-toddler care (Goal 4) has been exacerbated as the community-based providers who serve them struggle to remain in operation due to the rapidly increasing cost of living in the county, ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, anticipated reductions in program income from the shift of four-year-olds to TK, and increased staffing shortages (see also Priority Area: Workforce). These challenges have resulted in a significant number of closures among FCCH and community-based providers.³⁵ Temporary resources like American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding and hold-harmless clauses have helped publicly funded programs stay afloat, but in the absence of those supports - and as they phase out - more community-based programs are at risk of closure as well. Thus, the challenges around access to infant/toddler care have shifted from centering on the number and quality of available slots to the financial survival of programs within the mixed-delivery system that serve this population. Given the significant expansion in services for four-year-olds through universal TK, addressing barriers to access for children ages zero to three should be prioritized. Noteworthy is the difficulty of meaningfully tracking enrollment and need for care during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., attendance vs. licensed capacity).

Family fees were waived as part of the pandemic response. Beginning in October 2023, a new family fee structure ensures that no family who is eligible for subsidized care will pay more than 1% of their income in family fees and that families under 75% of SMI will pay no fees.

Partners noted that operating a publicly funded program (Goal 3 and 4) is complex, and programs need enhanced support around program requirements and operations. The changing policy landscape amplifies the need for initial "onboarding" and ongoing administrative support for CSPP and CCTR contract holders. Further, the administrative work involved with finding out about supplemental grants and submitting them within tight deadlines should not be underestimated. Partners mentioned that programs need to be connected/networked in order to learn about and respond to resource opportunities.

While the mandated changes to CSPP program enrollment increase the potential for children with disabilities to access general education preschool environments, partners highlighted questions related to these changes. Of note are questions about the discrepancy between the way in which slots will be held and the way in which children with disabilities are identified. Data from the U.S. Department of Education show that just over 4% of children aged 3- to 5-year were identified with a disability in AY 2020/2021.³⁶ Children become eligible as they are identified, which occurs throughout the year. Questions remain around what it means to hold 10% of slots for children with disabilities, particularly if there are not that many children with IEPs available to fill the slots (leaving empty slots which can negatively impact program income). If the slots are released, however, this would mean that children who are identified mid-year may not be able to access an inclusive placement, even if their IEP team deems this is most appropriate. This could potentially put LEAs in legal jeopardy.

Furthermore, questions arose about the ways in which young children with extensive support needs or significant behavioral challenges fit into the UPK landscape. Similarly, while ELOP requires that LEAs establish options for 9 hours of care for students, after school programs and community-based organizations are currently unequipped to meet the needs of children with significant support needs. Careful consideration regarding how these systems will be designed to address the needs of young children with significant disabilities, including providing training for teachers and adequate support for classrooms is warranted.

Opportunities

In addition to the increased funding for ECE programs, partners highlighted that conversations about potential local funding initiatives in the region have been ongoing (Goal 1). Partners identified key priority areas that could be targeted by local funding initiatives (Goal 1) to supplement what the state has funded through UPK; these suggestions include wage subsidies for providers, programming for infants and toddlers, and services for “gap families” who struggle to afford the cost of

care despite incomes that are just above eligibility cut-offs. It was noted that, because the lowest income families will benefit from existing state programs, local initiatives should consider income eligibility guidelines that use a graduated scale, rather than all-or-nothing cut-offs, to better meet the community’s needs.

CSPP eligibility has expanded so that children living in high need schools districts, children who are TK eligible, and children with disabilities can enroll, regardless of income, so long as all income eligible children have been served first.

There is some excitement around the opportunity to focus more attention on the historically underserved 0-3 population in light of the changing landscape. Some community-based childcare centers are pivoting to provide infant-toddler care in more classrooms in response to the expansion of TK. CDSS has provided expansion grant funding opportunities (General Child Care and Development Funds) that can be used to provide additional direct services, including center-based infant/toddler care, in priority zip code areas. Further, successful local initiatives have been launched to support FFN providers, who play a key and sometimes overlooked role in infant/toddler care. These include the FFN Program at Franklin McKinley School District, Jobs to Grow at Grail Family Services, and the FFN Caregiver Support Network at San José Public Library. FCCH are also integral to infant/toddler caregiving. A promising county-level opportunity led by FIRST5 Santa Clara County is the design and development of a Santa Clara County Family Child Care Network and Shared Services Alliance.³⁷ This initiative engages FCCH providers in setting priorities around sharing back-end administrative services associated with operating programs so that providers can focus on providing education and care.

Opportunities also exist for interagency collaboration to increase access to ECE that meets family’s needs. In particular, ELOP provisions may prompt a higher degree of collaboration between community-based programs and LEAs as LEAs seek to identify options for extended care services that are both appropriate for younger children

The Early Learning Opportunity Program (ELOP) provides 9 hours per day of combined school and afterschool care and 30 days summer care for TK to 6th grade students who are low-income, English Learner, or foster youth.

and are attractive to their families. The shift of R&R services to the SCCOE also presents new opportunities to effectively support parents and families as they navigate various options for ECE and apply for subsidized slots based on their eligibility status. The SCCOE has effectively invested in resources to track enrollment and need (see also Articulation), and is now well positioned to incorporate FCCH, FFN, and private childcare providers into their network and referral services.

Despite the logistical hurdles that may need to be navigated to establish inclusive placements for children with disabilities,

these changes present exciting opportunities to establish robust inclusive programs throughout the county. The expansion of TK, along with revisions to the authorization of Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) teachers to teach in such programs, provides districts the opportunity to develop co-taught programs that maximize the knowledge and expertise of both general and special education teams. Allotting spaces for children with IEPs to enroll in CSPP classrooms regardless of income eligibility similarly allows districts to establish programs that meet the needs of 3-year-olds with disabilities - and those four-year-olds with disabilities for whom the IEP team agrees that TK may not be appropriate.

Initial Recommendations

The following recommendations surfaced from the review of goals delineated in the Access priority area:

- Increase enrollment of children ages zero to three, especially those eligible for subsidized care, in ECE programs by addressing barriers to access.
- Enhance the R&Rs ability to track capacity and desired enrollment in ECE programs across the full range of licensed providers.
- Continue and expand SCCOE's Steps to Success enrollment campaign to provide parents with up-to-date information on program enrollment options and to highlight program enrollment options for families with children with disabilities.
- Expand capacity to provide new and existing ECE providers with opportunities for training and technical assistance. This includes expansion of the Child Care Initiative Project (CCIP) business supports program, development of the Shared Services Alliance, supports for FFN providers, and grants application support.
- Increase the capacity of the Inclusion Collaborative, CPIN, and other supports for providers seeking to establish inclusive ECE opportunities for young children with disabilities.

Articulation, Alignment, and Data Systems

2017 Early Learning Master Plan: Articulation, Alignment and Data Systems Goals

1. Expand School- ECE Provider Networks
2. Assign Unique Student Identification Numbers to 0–5-Year-Old Children
3. Provide Parents with School Readiness and Enrollment Information
4. Include ECE Data in the Developing Countywide Integrated Data System
5. Promote the Use of Validated School Readiness Assessments

Progress and Updates

Goals within this priority area require substantial collaboration and cooperation across systems. The first goal (Goal 1) aims to expand the county’s Early Learning Provider Network (ELPN) and enhance collaboration between districts, ECE center-based providers, and licensed FCCH providers. The ELMP 2017 full report notes that “an Early Learning Providers Network is a key goal for the ELMP because participants can work to address the challenge that there is currently no formal means of communication between ECE and TK-12 public education.” Progress towards this goal has been realized, in part, through recent Universal Access Pilot efforts (e.g., with Alum Rock and Kidango) and the implementation of UPK is expected to drive increased alignment between ECE providers and LEAs. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that elementary schools are well positioned to coordinate with community providers, including ECE providers, wellness centers, and mental health supports. The Pre-Elementary Education Longitudinal Study (PEELS), funded by the U.S. Department of Education, is examining the characteristics of children receiving preschool special education, the services they receive, their transitions across educational levels, and their performance over time on assessments of academic and adaptive skills. Relatedly, the CDE released its study of “Potential Fiscal Barriers to Prekindergarten Through Third Grade Inclusion for Students with Disabilities” in May 2023, including a series of recommendations addressing barriers to the “One System” model of inclusive special education²⁸.

In 2019, the CDE published *The Alignment of the California Preschool Learning Foundations with Key Early Education Resources* presenting the developmental continuum of learning for children from birth through kindergarten.

The Steps to Success initiative distributed more than 23,000 flyers and brochures on school readiness and enrollment through venues including doctor’s offices and libraries prior to the 2022-23 school year.

SCCOE’s Steps to Success campaign, Childcare Portal, and R&R services have been particularly helpful in promoting enrollment in ECE programs across the county. These services also provide parents with information on program enrollment and school readiness (Goal 3) such that SCCOE serves as a hub of information and resources on the importance and impact of high-quality ECE programs.²⁹

Since the development of the ELMP in 2017, the SCCOE has worked with stakeholders across the county to address goals focusing on articulation and data systems (Goal 4), particularly through the expansion of TK-12 dashboards to include and integrate the county’s ECE system. These efforts are guided by a vision of ensuring a high-quality experience for all families by helping them use data to find the right fit program for them (with a location that works), and for their child. Ultimately, these data dashboards are intended to include data about individual children before the early grades of school, including DRDP data, health and dental screenings, as well as chronic absenteeism.

There has been noteworthy progress in developing and piloting strategies to assign unique student identification (SID) numbers to young children for use in countywide integrated data systems (Goal 2). The utility of assigning children unique identifiers from birth is becoming better recognized across stakeholder groups, with a shared vision to use information to inform parents, monitor access, and track student outcomes. Over the course of the pandemic, and following the release of the state’s Master Plan in 2020, attempts to assign unique SIDs have been met with challenges, in part due to the reorganization of educational and social services. At the same time, the SCCOE pursued parallel efforts, and has recently completed three pilot programs to assign SIDs for children ages 0-5 years old (Baby Gateway with Healthier Kids Foundation; CAIR files; and Kidango). The county’s SID workgroup is seeking to expand these efforts to include ECE providers and training on related data governance processes. These efforts will be significantly strengthened through the implementation of AB 22 (McCarty) which requires LEAs to collect the same student data for children in their CSPP programs as they do for children in TK, “will provide longitudinal pupil data for pupils enrolled in state preschool programs” beginning in July 2024³⁰.

There appears to be a general consensus among subsidized, center-based ECE providers on the use of the DRDP as school readiness assessment (SRA). At the same time, a majority of LEAs plan to also continue using local assessments for TK/K (see Table 4). A county-wide Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) Summer Symposium in 2022 brought districts together around the need for shared language around kindergarten readiness as well as for a holistic perspective on this type of assessment. Kindergarten teachers discussed developmentally appropriate practice in kindergarten and alignment to high-quality assessment. A promotional video featuring teachers was developed for superintendents and school boards, stating the importance of these shared perspectives. Future work will dive into how evidence for SRA metrics will be collected across ECE and TK programs. Assuming the state continues endorsing the DRDP, the county is well positioned to get districts and teachers on board with using the DRDP. Because the DRDP is an assessment that can be used for all children, promoting its use may prevent the need for using multiple assessments to appropriately assess dual language learners and those children with IEPs. DRDP can also be used in data dashboards (e.g., with early efforts by Franklin McKinley to use and track DRDP data for special education preschool students).

Table 4. LEA Plans for TK and Kindergarten Assessment

| Local Assessments | Desired Results (DRDP) | Ages and Stages (ASQ) | Teaching Strategies (TS) Gold | Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP & SDQ) |
|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 71.0% (20) | 46.0% (13) | 29.0% (8) | 4.0% (1) | 4.0% (1) |

Challenges

Some efforts to expand the county’s Early Learning Provider Network (ELPN) and bridge community based ECE programs and elementary schools (Goal 1) have been delayed, in part due to the lack of designated staff to support these collaborations. The R&R and the Steps to Success campaigns have been effective in serving as a hub of

information for parents and families of young children. Continued marketing and additional collaboration with the network of early learning providers may enhance the range of options families are able to access via the online portal. These efforts may be limited by state regulations and funding, and providers may struggle to provide a timely response to parent inquiries.

The SCCOE's interest in establishing unique SIDs is in alignment with related state efforts (Goal 2). However, significant coordination across systems is needed to assign unique identification numbers at the first point of contact with the child, be it at birth or when public services are first used. The recent reorganization of services overseen by the CDE and CDSS has likely interfered with overall progress in this area, given the need for data sharing arrangements to be established across historically siloed departments and agencies. Along these lines, ECE programs that rely on funding from both state agencies face increasing and/or duplicative reporting requirements, without provision of sufficient resources for staffing to support data collection and reporting.

Stakeholders report that providers operating programs funded by different state agencies are concerned about the need to use and report on multiple SRAs. Any local effort to expand the use of SRAs must be aligned with existing reporting requirements to avoid creating additional burdens on ECE providers and LEAs. As noted above, the DRDP is a widely used assessment that meets the varied needs of California's diverse young learners. There are certainly challenges in promoting and adopting validated SRAs that stem from the comprehensive nature of the DRDP, which focuses on child observation, includes parental input, and assessment of holistic development. This requires time for providers to become familiar with the tool, implement it with children, and use results to inform practice. These barriers can be overcome with continued professional development efforts like the 2022 KRA symposium, as well as through the support of bilingual staff who can support documentation of emergent bilinguals' abilities in whatever language the child is using to ensure fidelity.

Efforts to centralize and enhance articulation and data systems (Goal 4) provide opportunities to track, integrate, synthesize, and share important metrics across a broad range of stakeholders. This is no small feat as each of the following conditions will need to be met: Providers agree to collect and share data (sign Early Enterprise MOU); providers agree to assign SIDs (and there are staff hired for this purpose); and, providers utilize and report on a common SRA. These efforts will also need to be coupled with training for administrators and teachers to use the data and dashboards. This will likely require updates to processes and personnel. Moreover, it is important that primary data teams in the county office collaborate and communicate with one another, with an established point of contact for ECE providers.

Opportunities

Stakeholder interviews surfaced several opportunities to build and enhance existing Early Learning Provider Networks. New funding opportunities and supports for UPK and TK from the state (e.g., ELOP) serve as the impetus for new collaborations (e.g., districts convening UPK planning councils and new consortia across the district). As noted above, the county is well positioned to leverage the R&R services and systems to build connections among a broad range of providers, including center-based and FCCH providers. Steps to Success resources can also be helpful in providing information that parents can use to navigate the new UPK system; to understand their options to enroll their children in TK, center-based care, or FCCH. The SCCOE can also build on successful efforts to solicit provider feedback to inform the development of data systems to ensure reporting options are relevant to providers, and to help stakeholders understand their role in these systems.

LEAs in Santa Clara County received \$7.6M in UPK planning and implementation grants with the goal of increasing access to ECE for all 3- and 4-year-olds through the mixed delivery system.

Interviews with ECE leaders and stakeholders suggest that there is a shared appreciation for the utility of unique SIDs and validated SRAs, as long as they are implemented in a way that avoids undue burden on program staff and teachers. Over the next few years, SCCOE plans to work with key stakeholders, including groups of teachers, to continue efforts towards establishing a common SRA. These conversations will include opportunities for teachers to learn and share how readiness assessment data can be useful to guide instruction, as well as learn more about how evidence for these metrics is collected, shared, and interpreted among ECE, TK, and K instructors.

California’s 2022-23 State Budget included \$2M in funding to incorporate early identification for learning disabilities into the state’s preschool assessment tools, including a process for follow-up by expert evaluators.

Coordinated data systems may also support Child Find operations to ensure children with disabilities are referred to early intervention or early childhood special education services for evaluation. The integration of R&R into the SCCOE, which provides Early Start services, the Inclusion Collaborative, hosts administration of Special Education Local Plan Areas, and provides direct ECE services through programs mandated to provide care for children with disabilities provides a clear opportunity to strengthen and

streamline the process of informing parents about program eligibility and enrolling children with disabilities into inclusive, high quality ECE programs.

Initial Recommendations

The following recommendations surfaced from the review of goals delineated in the Articulation, Alignment, and Data Systems priority area:

- Leverage the implementation of UPK to support articulation and alignment between LEAs and ECE providers, e.g., facilitating districts to contract with non-LEA providers to deliver ELOP.
- Expand ECE data importation into DataZone as a key tool to integrate and share information among providers, educators, administrators, and ultimately parents – including data that monitors placements and outcomes for children with disabilities.
- Enhance supports for educators and providers to implement the DRDP as a shared SRA while ensuring that data reporting requirements are aligned to minimize administrative demands on ECE providers and LEAs.



Facilities

2017 Early Learning Master Plan: Facilities Goals

1. Offer Facilities Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) to Providers
2. Create a Countywide ECE Facilities Development Plan
3. Advocate for Sustainable Sources of Funding for ECE Facilities
4. Enhance Facilities Licensing to Improve the Quality of ECE Facilities
5. Engage Cities as Partners in ECE Facilities Development

Progress and Updates

In this priority area, 2017 ELMP goals primarily focused on expanding facilities for the non-LEA ECE system (with exceptions like Goal 3, discussed below). While there is no secured funding for a sustainable model for ECE Facilities TTA (Goal 1), interviews with stakeholders highlight the contributions of some committed leaders in this area who provide programs with informal guidance and advocate for developmentally appropriate facilities. Also, with the move of R&R services to the SCCOE, stakeholders report an increasing effort towards securing funding to establish county-level TTA provision and related supports (e.g., a warmline; resource packets on funding, fees, permitting processes) for those who want to open new centers or update facilities, particularly within known childcare deserts. This support includes technical assistance offered through the CCIP around licensing, marketing, and other administrative aspects of operating an FCCH program.

There has been progress in developing a county-wide facilities development plan (Goal 2) with the countywide ECE Facilities Study expected in Fall 2023. Some recent state-level grants have provided funding for facilities across a range of ECE program types, although these one-time opportunities fall short of the more aspirational goal of sustainable funding (Goal 3). State level UPK and ELOP funding opportunities have laid some foundation for achieving Goal 3, which called for the co-location of ECE centers on public school campuses and the inclusion of ECE in district facilities plans and bond measures, as they encourage collaboration between LEAs and ECE programs. These collaborations are likely to become increasingly important as UPK has dramatically changed the facilities landscape for community- and LEA-based ECE programs. The SCCOE has been working to update LEAs with lists of ECE providers within their boundaries so as to facilitate collaboration on both UPK and ELOP projects. More work needs to be done to ensure that ECE providers have the facilities necessary to work with LEAs, such as by ensuring that these facilities meet ADA requirements. Though stakeholders referred to San José's long history – and continued efforts – to promote ECE programs, additional effort is needed to effectively engage cities as partners in EL facilities development (Goal 5).

Since 2022-23, the State of California has budgeted \$690M to LEAs through the Preschool, TK, and Full-Day K Facilities Grant and another \$250M to non-LEA ECE providers through the Infrastructure Development Grants program to increase ECE facilities capacity and quality.

Challenges

The importance and the financial expense of establishing, maintaining, and improving developmentally appropriate childcare facilities have long been recognized. Cities are moving forward with multi-use development projects to meet the state's dire need for affordable housing. While such projects present significant opportunities in this priority area, stakeholders report that the low profit margins associated with incorporating childcare into new property developments can make these investments financially risky for lenders. Without a paid staff person committed to promoting and coordinating such projects, anticipated progress in this area may be limited. As noted in the Access section above, regarding local funding efforts, a sustainable funding stream has not yet been identified for ECE programs, which could target facilities in addition to quality and wages.

The City of San Jose 2021 Notice of Funding Availability included bonus points for including childcare in affordable housing proposals.

Calls for enhanced licensing requirements around ECE facilities (Goal 4) need to be well thought-out and coupled with adequate resources for programs to address deficiencies, so as to avoid adding new barriers to program access. The state's approach to providing UPK to four-year-olds via TK in public schools has caused a shift in facility needs and priorities. In particular, community-based programs will now need to adapt their spaces to serve additional infants and toddlers.

The County of Santa Clara has funded a \$15M ECE facilities grant program that will provide facilities funds to ECE programs beginning in 2023-24.

From the LEA's perspective, priorities have shifted to focus on modifying classrooms and facilities as more four-year-olds become eligible to enroll in TK (see Table 5 for details regarding LEA facility needs). Challenges in modifications often include meeting square footage requirements, meeting requirements for in-classroom bathrooms, and adding age-appropriate play structures to shared play areas. Districts report challenges in finding funding to improve existing facilities and add additional classrooms to accommodate the predicted enrollment numbers. Many providers do not yet have an updated facilities master plan that includes the UPK expansion, limiting the preparations they are able to make in advance.

Opportunities

To the north of the county, Build Up San Mateo County provides a model of an effective, cross-sector community initiative that has resulted in measurable progress in ECE facilities development across San Mateo County's mixed delivery system. Santa Clara County could build upon this model to address the unique needs of providers and LEAs within its boundaries. Further, outside of the formal caregiving settings, FFNs provide an unknown level of access to the 'facilities' in which young children receive care. Increasing recognition for the role of informal providers within the mixed delivery system will help to ensure all ECE providers are included in conversations with city and county leaders.

The state has provided over \$420M in Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program (IEEEP) grant funding to build and renovate ECE facilities so they are more accessible to children with disabilities. SCCOE has received over \$5M of IEEEP funds to renovate ECE facilities and outdoor spaces to make them more inclusive.

Although stemming from regional challenges such as the lack of affordable housing, the trend toward declining elementary school enrollment has freed up physical space for the TK and UPK expansion, and the majority of districts report adequate space to meet enrollment (see Table 5). Funding from the state has been approved (though subsequently delayed) to support the construction and retrofitting of classrooms for ECE programs provided by

local school districts, and investments through ELOP could further support enhancements for wrap-around care. UPK-related investments also provide opportunities for collaboration between ECE providers around sharing and enhancing facilities on or near school campuses. With the state’s current funding model, school districts may be best positioned to provide the administrative support to initiate and/or coordinate these collaborations.

Table 5. Santa Clara County LEA Facility Plans for TK/PK Enrollment (28 Districts Reporting)

| Space to meet enrollment? | Adaptive equipment? | Space meets code/standard? | Transportation offered? |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 85.7% (24) | 78.6% (22) | 71.4% (20) | 7.1% (2) |

While UPK provides an opportunity to increase the co-location of ECE and school facilities (Goal 3), stakeholders shared insights that could help inform progress. They noted challenges that arise when ECE programs lease, rather than own, facilities on public school campuses. Such ECE programs need to use a portion of their already thin profit margins to pay rental rates that have been increasing over time. Further, getting approval for renovations to meet licensing requirements or to expand services can be a challenge, as school districts often face financial constraints in their facilities budgets and may not be required to update these facilities. Additional factors were reported that influence potential LEA-ECE co-location and collaboration efforts. For example, districts may have available classrooms to modify for TK (due to declining enrollments) but those rooms may not be located at sites that offer TK or CSPP. Districts may choose to shift resources into or away from CSPP based on local needs, including the need to repurpose available classrooms for TK. Taken together, for LEA-ECE collaboration to thrive, it is necessary to tailor facility-based technical assistance to a community’s unique profile, with consideration to existing ECE facilities in close vicinity to elementary schools, changes in enrollment trends across program types, and city-specific plans for multi-use facilities development. While sharing resource packets (e.g., city zoning resources, funding information) using a multi-county or regional structure continues to be a viable goal moving forward (Goal 1), the need for programs on the ground to navigate local zoning requirements and braid varied funding opportunities will likely require individualized and specialized technical support.

AB 2827 (enacted in 2022) and SB 722, sponsored by SCCOE, remove regulatory barriers that prevent children with disabilities from enrolling in inclusive early learning programs.

Initial Recommendations

The following recommendations surfaced from the review of goals delineated in the Facilities priority area:

- Advocate for sustainable financial support to build and maintain developmentally appropriate and ADA-compliant ECE facilities across the county’s mixed delivery system.
- Provide facilities TTA for LEA, non-LEA, center- and home-based, licensed, and FFN providers through dedicated facilities specialists and warmline services to increase access to infant-toddler and inclusive ECE programs.
- Cultivate multi-sector partnerships between ECE providers, LEAs, cities, public agencies, housing developers, businesses, and employers to optimize facilities identification and development for ECE programs and wrap-around care.

Family Engagement

2017 Early Learning Master Plan: Family Engagement Goals

1. Implement a Countywide Family Engagement Framework
2. Create and Sustain a Joint Schools-ECE Family Engagement Collaborative
3. Launch a Family Engagement Public Education Campaign

Progress and Updates

Some of the specific actions and goals identified in 2017 have not yet come to fruition, but leaders and stakeholders across the ECE landscape share the sentiment that this area should continue to be prioritized in the county's ELMP. ECE programs and LEAs are re-evaluating what family engagement means in their settings, and there has been an important shift to engage in family partnerships, thereby recognizing the bi-directional nature of effective family-school relationships as well as the role of families in school/program decision-making (Goal 3). Some schools and ECE programs have invested resources to provide avenues for ongoing conversation with parents and to hire family engagement staff and community liaisons to, among other things, help families navigate access to ECE and other professional services. As pointed out by a stakeholder, such support goes well beyond assisting families with paying for childcare but instead aims to strengthen the family as a whole. In the wake of recent increases in mental health and other needs impacted by COVID-19, stakeholders highlighted that families continue to need support navigating across systems to access needed services that can support their child's well-being.

SCCOE was awarded the county Resource and Referral (R&R) contract in June 2020 and supports 500 families per month to find childcare and other resources online and in-person.

The Strengthening Families Approach has been incorporated into San José City's early education standards, with training offered to an increasing range of city departments providing care and education to children under age 5 (Goal 1). The City of San José and County of Santa Clara have also increased their collaboration in this area to leverage the strengths of each public entity and facilitate a no-wrong-door approach for families needing to access services. Highlighting a local resource, Grail Family Services has trained approximately 600 early educators on their strengths-based family partnership framework, with plans to expand the implementation of a Family Math Initiative designed with a national group of researchers committed to engaging families with their young child's math learning at home. Another asset in the region, the Inclusion Collaborative, has developed resources such as Family Calming Kits, the Inclusion Warmline, and monthly parenting classes to support parents of children with disabilities.

In this region, FIRST5 Santa Clara County continues to play an active role in family engagement initiatives. They continue to provide staff across their network of 26 Family Resource Centers (FRCs) with strengths-based family training. FRCs in turn provide services and training to parents on a range of topics tailored to their neighborhood and school communities. The Universal Access Pilot created a Joint Schools-ECE Family Engagement Collaborative (Goal 2). Now in its last year of funding and support through the County of Santa Clara Office of Cultural Competency/Office of the County Executive and FIRST5 Santa Clara County, it brought

First 5 SCC Family Resource Centers supported over 8,000 families with food, diapers, and other needs during the COVID-19 emergency response.

together an FRC, ECE space, and school district space to support families more seamlessly using a culturally responsive, person-centered approach. FIRST5 Santa Clara County has pursued other innovative partnerships to bridge services, such as bringing CalWORKs representatives into preschools to communicate directly with families in a familiar location. They also promote quarterly public education campaigns (Goal 3) on topics such as vaccination, developmental screening, and awareness of adverse childhood experiences.

Challenges

Multiple factors likely impacted progress towards the specific goals identified in this priority area. Leaders and stakeholders shared that competing priorities, including more time-sensitive matters surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, often de-prioritize efforts in this space. Trends in employee shortages and turnover, evident across many industries, make it difficult to implement these long-term and coordinated planning processes. It is important to consider that, among programs that have made strides in building relationships with community and families, an additional layer of coordination at the countywide level may not be needed.

A challenge associated with family partnership is a fundamental shift in mindset that may be needed among those who interface with families to avoid deficit-framing and move towards an asset-based view of families. This involves listening to the perspectives of family members both within and beyond the nuclear family, sharing decision-making power with families, and adopting broader conceptions of family engagement beyond traditional modes of participation. Such partnering must also be sensitive to the unique needs of families with young children with disabilities, particularly as they navigate the referral and evaluation process and begin receiving services. Effective collaboration with diverse families will also require culturally and linguistically diverse support staff to establish community connections, navigate siloed services, and facilitate authentic parent participation. In addition to taking time to learn such skills, program staff implementing effective family partnerships also require administrative support beyond what a teacher can be expected to manage on top of classroom responsibilities. Attempting to coordinate family outreach and communication in multiple languages should not be additional unpaid expectations placed on classroom teachers.

Opportunities

Building relationships with families and viewing the parent as the child's first teacher (Goal 3) has long been valued by the field of early childhood. The state's investments in UPK planning grants provides some financial resources for LEAs to gather family input, which is one important aspect of family partnership. In addition to ensuring that these efforts are responsive to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse families, they should intentionally include families of children with disabilities, as CSPP programs and TK classrooms prepare to increase inclusive services. Opportunities to facilitate authentic, bi-directional relationships with parents and caregivers include leveraging existing efforts among community organizations and ECE providers, some of which already convey values around robust partnerships and cultural affirmation in their mission statements or practices. Local efforts and investments already being made in this space should be recognized and uplifted, and organizations closely connected to communities (e.g., FRCs, non-profit organizations, Head Start) should have a place at the table in defining future efforts. More generally, the region's FRCs provide a robust network to support future innovations or coordination around family partnership within the communities they each serve. The shift of R&R services to SCCOE facilitates families' access to information about available ECE programs and resources across the mixed delivery system. Stakeholders shared that creating an "Inclusive Endorsement" option could help guide families to programs ready to work with children with disabilities,

The City of San José's Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services program has implemented the Strengthening Families family engagement framework in its Little Learners and Kinder Prep recreational preschool programs.

and to providers who have completed training on inclusion as documented in the Workforce registry. This option is currently in development as part of the ongoing continuous improvement of the R&R Childcare Portal. In addition to local expertise, at the national level, the Center for the Study of Social Policy has continued to provide updated free resources on Strengthening Families and the Protective Factors Framework³⁹, which utilize strengths-based approaches to promote optimal child outcomes.

Initial Recommendations

The following recommendations surfaced from the review of goals delineated in the Family Engagement priority area:

- Reframe the concept of family engagement to family partnerships and share examples of effective family partnership, resources already in use, and opportunities for funding that could support implementing these activities.
- Expand collaborative efforts to implement a “no wrong door” approach for families to access public services, including ECE, child development, health, and human services through initiatives such as FRCs and community schools.
- Continue existing community education efforts, such as Steps to Success, on the availability of ECE programs and other services, the importance of supportive ECE experiences, and the role parents/primary caregivers and other caregivers play in children’s development.
- Expand efforts to partner with families of children with disabilities by researching their needs, identifying and expanding the number of ECE programs that are prepared for inclusion of children with special needs, and encouraging early intervention providers and special education programs within LEAs to align family partnership efforts across general and special education.



Program Quality

2017 Early Learning Master Plan: Program Quality Goals

1. Expand Participation in the QRIS and Other Quality Accreditation Programs
2. Advocate for Improved Quality in Transitional Kindergarten Programs
3. Support ECE Programs in Implementing Quality Improvement Strategies
4. Provide a Common ECE Program Quality Data System
5. Assess the Quality of Out-of-School-Time (OST) Programs

Progress and Updates

Goals from the 2017 ELMP in this priority area center on the county's QUALITY MATTERS QRIS. Progress has been made towards expanding participation in the QUALITY MATTERS and local rating data has been analyzed (Goal 1) demonstrating the positive relationship between higher QRIS ratings and children's progress on the DRDP (Strong Start, July 2022). The QRIS matrix is currently under revision; some notable changes include removing the need for external Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) assessors and adjusting the timelines for evaluation (from every 2 years to every 5 years for providers scoring 4 or 5). SCCOE's R&R department also provides information about quality indicators in ECE programs (including a quality childcare checklist) to help parents better understand how to choose quality care for their children.

While there appears to be a general consensus around the need for quality standards and assessment, the COVID-19 pandemic and the movements towards racial justice have temporarily, and perhaps permanently, transformed perspectives on quality rating systems. All ratings in QUALITY MATTERS stopped in the wake of the pandemic, and participation continues to be optional this year. The field is also confronting a societal shift in the recognition of systemic racism, and related concerns have surfaced around quality rating systems. As noted above, a group of advocates led by the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network, Parent Voices CA, and the Child Care Law Center concluded that "QRIS is racist"⁶ in August 2020, and a recent study⁴⁰ on New York City's universal prekindergarten program demonstrated disparities in the average quality of providers experienced by black and white students. In a national analysis⁷, researchers found lower rates of program participation in QRIS among communities with majority Black residents. Such trends reveal that work remains to be done to address equity gaps and to ensure that voices from predominantly Black and Brown communities are authentically represented in a quality improvement system that is meant to be inclusive and universally supportive.

QUALITY MATTERS, Santa Clara County's QRIS, now has 142 centers, 564 licensed family childcare homes and 80 license-exempt providers participating in its programs. These programs serve over 7,500 children.

Stakeholders share that there has been a systemic shift from prioritizing the rating process to focusing on continuous quality improvement processes (Goal 3), whereby programs maintain decision-making power to identify meaningful focus areas that meet their community needs and receive support in determining the next steps of their self-determined improvement goals. FIRST5 Santa Clara County has also leaned into supporting Communities of Practice, wherein FCCH providers meet together monthly with facilitators from the Inclusion Collaborative to share insights on creating supportive and inclusive environments for all children, including those with additional needs.

CDE and CDSS are required and funded to begin studying replacing the market survey-based reimbursement model for ECE providers with one based on the cost of quality care by July 1, 2023.

Significant progress has been made among cities and library districts to improve the quality of existing community-based ECE programs (see also Access Goal 1), including recent strides made by the City of San José to develop and adopt new quality standards for all city programs serving 0–5-year-olds. Efforts to advocate for high-quality, developmentally appropriate TK (Goal 2) have become increasingly important as districts continue to adjust eligibility criteria to include all 4-year-olds, and efforts to advocate for improved teacher-child ratios (Goal 2) have been successful. CPIN continues to operate (Goal 2) with funding from CDSS to offer trainings to ECE providers, including

sessions accessible to TK teachers⁴¹. Regional efforts have also been made to raise awareness and understanding around the use of developmentally appropriate program features and practices (e.g., the Early Childhood Institute & Silicon Valley Community Foundation’s 2022 webinar series on Equity, Quality, and Inclusion in UPK)⁴². Finally, regarding OST programs (Goal 5), the state has made significant financial investments for TK-6th grade programs through the ELOP, as of 2021–22.

Challenges

Participation in QUALITY MATTERS has increased despite setbacks due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but some uncertainty remains around whether and how the structure is changing moving forward. ECE programs often place the burden of “getting a good rating” upon caregivers without providing adequate resources and training, resulting in some staff developing a negative view towards QRIS. In addition to the significant time commitment associated with participating in the QRIS rating process, being able to meet the teacher qualifications recognized in QRIS scores is not feasible for all providers and it is an increasing challenge to meet these criteria due to high turnover in the workforce. Without adequate compensation, staff are lost to turn over, and programs need to start again with training new staff. These challenges have been exacerbated by the TK expansion, as the appeal of higher pay and benefits has drawn more highly qualified ECE staff away from non-LEA programs, despite programs’ investment in those staff members’ training.

There is a focus for TK programs to offer developmentally appropriate curricula. A report from CSCCE (Montoya et al., 2022), indicates that approximately half of TK teachers reported that their district understood developmentally appropriate practice, while approximately 30% reported having difficulty accessing developmentally appropriate materials. Challenges stem from the lack of focus on competencies for supporting ECE associated with the Multiple Subjects credential; school districts need to learn how to provide professional development and evaluation to their existing workforce to support young learners (see Workforce). Stakeholders report ripple effects of COVID-19 that include increased social and emotional challenges among young children, which can require the involvement of special education and/or early childhood mental health specialists. While a new focus on extended care services for four-year-olds has emerged, the field continues to navigate challenges to maintain high-quality programming in this space. The ELMP goal and specific actions around OST quality (Goal 5) could be reframed to address the need for, and leadership on, quality and inclusion in ELOP.

AB 2806 (enacted in 2022), sponsored by SCCOE, prohibits ECE providers from suspending or expelling children, expands these provisions beyond CSPP to CCTR and FCCHEN programs, and increases the adjustment factor for early mental health consultation.

Opportunities

The state’s investment of millions of dollars to support LEAs’ engagement in UPK planning and workforce development (see Workforce) is intended to translate into high-quality program delivery. Moreover, the requirement

for all TK classrooms to maintain a ratio of 1 teacher to 12 students as of 2022-23⁴³ is likely to facilitate the provision of more responsive and individualized learning experiences for children. The additional proposed reduction in ratio to 1:10 will be implemented in 2024-25 and will also be applied to ELOP programs with TK aged students.⁴⁴ This ratio requirement presents LEAs with the opportunity to consider strategies to blend ECSE with TK programs, establishing more robust and sustainable inclusive learning opportunities for young children with and without disabilities.

California has a developmentally and linguistically appropriate set of tools in place to guide TK instruction, through the CDE's Preschool Learning Framework and Foundations (PLF), as well as the DRDP. The PLF offer educators, parents, and the public a clear understanding of the wide range of knowledge and skills that young children typically attain in early years of development, ranging from infancy through to the preschool years and early elementary school. As an observational assessment tool that is aligned with the PLF, the DRDP provides teachers with a means to assess children's learning along a continuum of developmental levels. These frameworks and assessment tools can be used together to plan the environment, play, learning activities, and instruction to meet the needs of the children and provide high-quality experiences. The CPIN training network, funded by the CDSS, is a robust system for teacher professional development around these tools and a broad range of early learning topics. The PLF guides programs' use of the foundations for instructional planning and professional development.

A new guidance tool for strengthening teacher/child interactions and quality improvement will be released by CDE by the end of 2023.

The state's UPK plans and planning grants call for increased collaboration between community-based ECE programs and LEAs⁴⁵, thereby providing opportunities to bring the voices and strengths of multiple partners to the table. SCCOE's Strong Start initiative has shared information about these opportunities with ECE providers in the county, including through an ECI Speaker Series⁴² presentation. While these efforts come with related challenges (e.g., identifying and funding staff to initiate these collaborations), a shared focus on program quality may bring together collaborations across the mixed delivery system, with potential impact across priority areas (facilities, access, articulation, workforce). New and ongoing partnerships with FIRST5 Santa Clara County and several "grassroots" communities of practice have also emerged, with shared values around supportive improvement practices. Coupled with QUALITY MATTERS outreach, the groups have been effective in increasing provider awareness of available professional development activities and may be helpful in promoting registration with the CA Workforce Registry.

With regards to the quality of OST services, the CA After School Network has begun offering statewide training and advocacy around ELOP programming⁴⁶. This network is described in their 2022-2025 strategic plan⁴⁷ as a catalyst for quality, a vehicle for advocacy, and a conduit for communications for OST programs, that is "of the field and for the field." Notably, representatives from local districts (i.e., Oak Grove) are acknowledged in this strategic plan and could be tapped in future efforts in this area.

Initial Recommendations

The following recommendations surfaced from review of the Program Quality priority area:

- Continue efforts to improve the QRIS process with feedback from all providers, including FFN, to implement a more "democratized" provider-driven program planning and improvement model.
- Develop tools and resources to expand and align quality improvement efforts beyond center- and home-based providers to include TK, ECSE, and ELOP programs, without diverting funds from quality improvement efforts for community-based programs.
- Prioritize expansion of coordinated access to ECSE and mental health professionals across delivery systems.

Workforce Development

2017 Early Learning Master Plan: Workforce Development Goals

1. Support Re-opening ECE Lab Schools at Community Colleges
2. Advocate for Worthy Wages for ECE Professionals
3. Increase Enrollment in the ECE Workforce Registry
4. Include ECE in Pre- & In-Service Elementary School Administrator Training
5. Create a Talent Pipeline Management Strategy for the ECE Workforce
6. Build Public Understanding and Esteem for the ECE Profession

Progress and Updates

The 2017 ELMP laid out a broad set of discrete goals for workforce development. These include an important, though somewhat aspirational, target of increasing public understanding and esteem for ECE (Goal 6), which continues to be a challenge for the field. The interrelated need for worthy wages (Goal 2) also continues to be a central and field-defining advocacy issue, particularly among programs outside of LEAs. These efforts are supported by the CA Master Plan, which includes strategies with a strong focus on equity and compensation for providers. While advocacy efforts have not yet yielded universal living wages for ECE professionals, there is some progress towards this objective. Importantly, the statewide Rate and Quality Workgroup report laid out recommendations for reimbursement rates that would cover the actual estimated cost for providing high-quality ECE to CA's diverse learners, as well as translate into living wages for providers across the mixed delivery system. It remains to be seen whether and when the workgroup's recommendations will be acted upon, although stakeholders reported some optimism about this effort. At the local level, a mark of progress in this area of worthy wages comes from Kidango, an ECE employer that has instituted a living wage as minimum wage for teachers (\$27/hour). The expansion of TK opens a career trajectory within the ECE landscape that affords opportunities for earning professional wages and benefits (Goal 2). The state has made significant investments in UPK-related

early educator training, through LEAs, to support individuals and staff pursuing ECE careers and educational pathways. Successful advocacy efforts have led to the inclusion of TK as a designated teacher shortage area for CDE, opening up additional funding sources for early educator preparation.

There has been limited advancement to date in the specific goal of reopening ECE lab schools at community colleges (Goal 1). However, other promising investments and progress areas involving community colleges have surfaced since 2017. These include state

and federal investments in apprenticeship programs, creating educational pathways⁴⁸ that allow ECE staff and FCCH providers to be paid and avoid accruing educational expenses while they pursue coursework towards an Associate Teacher child development permit. Further, there is a growing interest in workforce development programs for FFN providers, and these programs incorporate support for professionals to enroll in child development courses at local community colleges.

The contracted reimbursement rate for CSPP providers in Santa Clara County has increased from \$45.73 per child per day in 2017-18 to \$79.08 in 2022-23, a 73% increase.

To improve financial stability for providers during the COVID-19 pandemic, the state funded contracts based on enrollment rather than attendance. This has been extended to September 2023 and, based on proposed Federal funding changes, may become permanent.

Notable progress has been made in the targeted goal of increasing participation in the workforce registry (Goal 3). With support from WestEd, organizations offering training and professional development opportunities (e.g., CPIN, LPC, Inclusion Collaborative) now use enrollment in the registry as part of their registration processes for trainings, and the system is offering relatively seamless support for both participants and providers. Stakeholders report a continued need to build understanding of the advantages of using the registry, particularly among public school administrators.

The 2017 ELMP called for the inclusion of ECE content into pre- and in-service elementary school administrator training (Goal 4).

By 2019, the Early Learning Leadership Academy, developed by the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, reached 78 principals from 26 school districts⁴⁹, providing these in-service professionals with early childhood knowledge and systems skills. Also relevant to this goal, state grants for early educator teacher development⁵⁰ have included provision of funds for administrator training, recognizing the continued and increasing need for school leaders to understand and appreciate the ECE programs located on or near their school campuses.

The 2017 ELMP set out a comprehensive plan for developing an ECE Talent Pipeline Management Strategy (Goal 5), inclusive of better understanding members of the workforce and employer workforce needs and of creating clearer career pathways.

Locally, SCCOE and FIRST5 Santa Clara County have convened an Early Childhood Consortium that addresses elements of the talent management strategy goal by bringing together experts from school districts, ECE, and Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to address Pre-K and TK teacher shortages in support

of the ECE workforce pipeline. This initiative set out to connect individuals to financial support from the state, and to educational programs in the region, as they pursue a child development permit, teaching credential, or another ECE-related professional learning opportunity. Importantly, this 2017 ELMP priority area included a broad focus on the ECE workforce across the mixed delivery system, which this consortium is well positioned to retain. Additional conversations have advocated for the inclusion of ECE education as a strategic workforce need, which may allow access to funding through Department of Labor Workforce Development programs.

Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten have been added to the state's \$350M Teacher Residency Grant programs that provides up to \$40,000 in support to become a credentialed teacher.

Workforce pipeline efforts hinge on whether sustainable funding is available to ensure worthy wages for those in pursuit of ECE careers (Goal 2). In this space, CSCCE⁵¹ has continuously provided analyses and recommendations to understand and support the ECE workforce. Their advocacy has shaped the conversation around issues of racial and economic justice for the ECE workforce, which is predominantly composed of women of color, as well as debate around the readiness of the existing workforce to teach four-year-olds in TK settings.⁵² While the expansion of TK is underway, the adoption workgroup recommendations is still pending, leaving the state at a crossroad as far as investing in career pathways tied to living and professional wages for its bifurcated system of early learning and childcare.

District UPK plans shed some light on planned efforts to leverage state investments targeted to LEAs to bolster the TK and CSPP teacher pipeline (Goal 5). As shown in Table 6 below, the majority of districts (over 70%) plan to partner with IHEs and the SCCOE to support the TK workforce pipeline. One quarter to one third of districts plan to pursue each of the various approaches to TK recruitment, such as developing teacher residencies and supporting teachers in pursuit of credentials and/or coursework. In contrast, only 18-21% of districts plan to pursue such

partnerships in support of the CSPP workforce pipeline. A comparison across the districts' TK versus CSPP workforce plans reinforces the need noted above for LEAs to attend to CSPP and other community-based partners in their UPK planning.

Table 6. SCC LEA Plans to Support TK Workforce Recruitment (28 Districts Reporting)

| LEA Plans to Support TK Teacher Recruitment | Districts Reporting |
|---|---------------------|
| Partner with SCCOE for TK teachers | 71.4% (20) |
| Partner with IHE for TK Teachers | 75.0% (21) |
| Apply for Teacher Residency Grant | 32.1% (9) |
| Join existing Intern Program | 32.1% (9) |
| Apply for Classified Employee Grant | 21.4% (6) |
| Partner with an IHE or SCCOE for 24 unit cohort | 25.0% (7) |
| Apply for workforce development funding | 17.9% (5) |
| Join existing apprenticeship program | 7.1% (2) |

Table 7. SCC LEA Plans to support CSPP Teachers in Obtaining Child Development Teacher Permit

| LEA Plans to Support CSPP Teachers | Districts Reporting |
|---|---------------------|
| Advising on credential requirements | 53.6% (15) |
| Stipend for Child Development Teacher Permit | 32.1% (9) |
| Info on scholarship grant opportunities | 32.1% (9) |
| Work with mentorship program for new TK teachers | 28.6% (8) |
| Advising on Child Development Permit and requirements | 25.0% (7) |
| Partner with IHE for CSPP workforce | 21.4% (6) |
| Stipend for credit-based coursework or degree | 17.9% (5) |
| Partner with SCCOE for CSPP workforce | 17.9% (5) |
| Info on grants for CSPP staff interested in extended learning | 10.7% (3) |

Challenges

The ECE field faces significant workforce shortages and turnover exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as chronically low provider pay. Some ECE professionals decided to retire or change professions during the pandemic, and stakeholders noted disparities in treatment among the ECE and TK-12 workforce as part of the cause, e.g., both groups had been deemed “essential” but without the same options to work and teach remotely. Furthermore, a recent report from CSCCE⁵³ indicates that the existing ECE workforce is aging. Only 3% of FCCH providers and 17% of center-based staff are under 30 years of age. Meanwhile, over half of family childcare providers and center directors in the Bay Area are over 50 years of age, putting them closer to retirement. This pattern suggests that many young people do not view working in ECE as a viable career option (an issue related to Goals 2 and 6), and the field will continue to struggle to meet the needs of the community unless changes are made to help fill open staff positions (Goal 5).

The field is grappling with issues around diversity in the workforce. The ECE workforce is significantly more culturally and linguistically diverse than the K-12 workforce, with approximately 70% of FCCH providers, 66% of center-based teaching staff, and 45% of center directors identifying as a race other than white (Powell et al., 2021) compared to approximately 70% of TK teachers identifying as white.⁵⁴ Both groups are overwhelmingly female (97-99%). FCCH providers (52%), center-based teaching staff (48%), and center directors (31%) are more likely to indicate that they are able to speak a language other than English compared to just 22% of TK teachers. As TK programming expands, there is concern around growing and maintaining a diverse TK teacher pipeline to better reflect the children in the classroom. Further, the improved 1:12 adult-child ratio requirement⁴³ that has been implemented for TK has introduced a new demand for staffing that did not exist in 2017.

In 2022, the state created the \$500M Golden State Pathways Program to support collaboration between LEAs, institutions of higher education and employers on workforce development in areas of acute statewide need, such as ECE.

At the same time, the financial incentive for teachers to move into a TK setting draws qualified teachers out of the pool for infant/toddler and preschool roles in non-LEA settings, exacerbating ongoing workforce shortages (Goal 5). Intentional efforts are needed to maintain the 0-3 workforce, which is historically the most underpaid. The CSCCE's 2020 Early Childhood Workforce Index⁵⁵ found that within center-based programs, infant/toddler teachers are paid up to \$8,375 less annually than preschool teachers. There remains a need to advocate for worthy wages to recruit and retain qualified teachers; doing so is tied closely with ensuring access to ECE in the community.

TK expansion means that a cadre of professionals that have already built competencies around working with 4-year-olds within other ECE programs will need to bridge their credentials to qualify to serve as the lead teacher in a TK setting. Teachers pursuing this advancement may face the chronic ECE challenge of finding time for

Beginning 2021-22, the state will provide \$260 million per year in additional funding for LEAs to serve 3- and 4-year-olds with disabilities through the Special Education Early Intervention Preschool Grant.

professional development during work hours (particularly in the midst of staffing shortages), which is particularly difficult for ECE providers who work multiple jobs to make ends meet and thus cannot attend night classes or weekend training. TK teachers, meanwhile, are less likely than their ECE counterparts to have completed coursework in child development or early childhood education, with approximately one third of teachers not yet meeting the requirement to complete 24 units of coursework or to earn a child development permit, with approximately a quarter of the current TK workforce “grandfathered-in”/exempt from this



requirement. While policy changes anticipate the expansion of inclusive ECE programs, these mandates do not include a recognition that this transition will require professional development and coaching for both ECE and ECSE educators who are traditionally prepared in siloed systems, and thus may not yet be ready to implement inclusive practices. Current mild/moderate education specialists, who are authorized to provide special education services in TK classrooms, may not possess a deep understanding of developmentally appropriate practice for young children. Collaboration across ECSE and CSPP programs will require time for teachers to meet and plan together.

Workforce recruitment and retention challenges overshadow many of the other worthwhile goals embedded within this ELMP priority area. Regarding the specific goal of reopening ECE lab schools at community colleges (Goal 1), a primary challenge identified through the stakeholder interviews is the need for high levels of sustained community college leadership and commitment to this goal. High turnover in administrative positions at IHEs is at odds with the long-term planning needed to move from planning to implementation of a financially sustainable lab school program. Insufficient subsidy rates have interfered with efforts for lab schools to remain financially viable, although this aspect of the funding landscape has become more favorable over time (see Access above).

Opportunities

A variety of new and ongoing initiatives exist to support ECE workforce development, including training resources overseen by LPCs; free ECE teacher training through CPIN (funded by CDSS); the ECE teacher stipend program with QUALITY MATTERS; training and program evaluation through SJSU's ECI; federal and state-funded apprenticeship programs; resources provided through FIRST5 Santa Clara County (e.g., the recent Shared Services Alliance Pilot); and the Inclusion Collaborative's training, coaching, and free warmline services. Regarding Goal 1, FIRST5 Santa

Clara County recently partnered with the County of Santa Clara to reach out to colleges and universities to begin exploring potential opportunities to reopen or expand existing child development spaces on campuses. Further, the Early Childhood Consortium facilitated by SCCOE and FIRST5 Santa Clara County provides a mechanism for the coordination of workforce pipeline opportunities that stem from multiple sources. Across the ECE landscape, state investments in UPK workforce development are now translating into financial support for pre- and in-service

The 2023-24 State Budget included \$122M in available federal funds to provide temporary stipends for CSPP employees.

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing has developed a PK-3 teaching add-on credential to train teachers in developmentally appropriate practices for young children in grades PK through 3. Training institutions were able to apply to offer this program in early 2023 with the first students expected to enroll before the end of 2023. SCCOE plans to apply to offer this credential.

ECE professionals to earn child development permits and credentials to teach in TK classrooms. Recently, the Early Childhood Consortium has developed processes for connecting pre-service and in-service ECE and TK teachers to the web of ECE workforce funding sources available to those who qualify.

With increased recognition of racial disparities across systems, and the growing appreciation of cultural diversity as an asset for the field, there is a shared recognition of the value of financially supporting a racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse teacher population. Funding targeted for TK teacher residencies, as well as the anticipated launch of the PK-3rd grade teaching credential (P3 ECE Specialist Instruction Credential) can provide opportunities to attract

and retain a pipeline of developmentally trained teachers of TK-3rd grade students who are well-positioned to earn professional levels of pay. Recognizing the assets that experienced early educators bring to the table, the new P3 teaching credential includes a mechanism for recognizing prior successful ECE teaching experience in the form of fieldwork equivalency.

Improved TK ratios provide opportunities for the use of more responsive and individualized practices in TK and thus provide an opportunity to enhance quality. Staffing two teachers in a classroom can also support the inclusion of children with disabilities into TK, as long as the second staff member has the appropriate qualifications to provide this support. Because the required qualifications for the second staff member in TK classrooms are minimal, it remains to be seen whether districts will hire staff with appropriate qualifications to support inclusion.

Initial Recommendations

The following recommendations surfaced from this review of the Workforce Development priority area:

- Advocate for rate reforms, increased reimbursement rates, and other initiatives – especially for infant/toddler programs – to fairly compensate the ECE workforce.
- Expand the Early Childhood Consortium to help all early educators identify educational pathways that align with their career goals, promote pathways intended for racially and linguistically diverse working professionals, and provide financial support to offset costs.
- Establish and expand programs that prepare both general and special education ECE and TK teachers to support the inclusion of children with disabilities through implementing universal design for learning and embedded instruction.



Holistic Recommendations

An overall analysis of the ECE landscape in the county suggests that the six priority areas identified in the 2017 ELMP continue to address key issues in the field, though individual goals may warrant revision in response to subsequent major changes. Broadly speaking, recommendations for future iterations of the ELMP for Santa Clara County could include the following:

1. Continue advocating for wage increases for all aspects of the mixed delivery system, as wages are a key mechanism for ensuring program access and quality.
2. As goals are updated, ensure they are written in a way that is observable and measurable when appropriate or possible. This includes reflecting on the intended agencies, departments, and organizations that participate in working towards the goals of the ELMP.
3. Explicitly incorporate the inclusion of children with disabilities through each of the revised priority areas.
4. Ensure that goals and objectives affirm the linguistic and cultural assets of the county's diverse families and providers. Specific attention could be placed on dual language learners who comprise the majority of children under age 5 in the state.
5. Gather and incorporate the perspectives of families and community stakeholders (including FCCH and FFN providers) more intentionally to inform future goals and strategies. Incorporate parent and family voices in strategic planning efforts (e.g., through a 'lived experience advisory board') where appropriate.
6. Prioritize the need to facilitate and fund collaboration between stakeholders and, in particular, between school districts and ECE programs providing extended care services for TK and preschool children.
7. Include support of community-based providers as an ongoing component of advocacy actions, in response to the financial challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and other landscape changes.
8. Highlight the need to facilitate access, quality, and worthy wages for infant/toddler care and education, while maintaining priorities among preschool and TK/K populations.



PROPOSED ACTIONS AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

Prioritization of Work Areas and Recommendations

Following the stakeholder interviews, landscape review, and development of recommendations presented above, focus groups were conducted with parents/caregivers and ECE providers to capture their perspective on the state of early learning in the county. The initial recommendations from the review and feedback from these focus groups, informed the development of a set of desired outcomes that reflect current opportunities and challenges. Three to five actions were identified in each of the six key priority areas. ECE leaders ranked the priority areas and actions in terms of importance and ability to make an impact via an online survey and then met to identify immediate steps to take in the next year to address the highest-ranking actions in each priority area.

During these activities, a number of themes surfaced, reflecting values and principles most important to ECE stakeholders in Santa Clara County. These themes include:

- Incorporating equity into ECE systems and processes.
- Improving access to high-quality care and supportive services for infants and toddlers and children with disabilities.
- Valuing and including families as partners in the ECE system.
- Improving coordination, communication, and alignment across partners, including between ECE providers and the TK-12 system.
- Supporting the full range of ECE providers (FFN, FCCH, center-based preschool, and TK).
- Ensuring programs of all types are developmentally appropriate and attend to the social-emotional needs of children and mental health needs of providers.
- Expanding the ECE workforce by increasing wages and reimbursement rates.
- Making ECE affordable for more families.
- Building on the successes and strengths of existing systems.

The survey completed by ECE leaders provided data on the degree to which they believed the priority areas were important and that county partners could make an impact in the area. The table below illustrates how they ranked the six priority areas:

Ranking of Priority Areas

1. Workforce Development
2. Access
3. Program Quality
4. Family Engagement
5. Articulation, Alignment, and Data Systems
6. Facilities

The remainder of this section provides observations gathered during the focus groups and survey and a ranked list of the actions for each area, based on a synthesis of this feedback and the initial recommendations for the stakeholder interviews described earlier in this report. A logic model describing how to achieve the desired outcome in each area was developed and details partners with a role to play in taking the action, the Year 1 activity

leaders identified to begin the action, and short- and long-term indicators of success. In addition to these logic models, this report provides baseline data for the outcome indicators identified for each goal. These indicators were selected because of their relevance to the desired outcome and the availability of existing data to track progress.

Workforce Development

Focus Group Feedback: Workforce Development

ECE leaders and providers continue to be concerned about workforce shortages and turnover, which were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many ECE providers had retired or changed professions during the pandemic, and disparities between the ECE and TK-12 workforce were exacerbated, as TK teachers were more likely to have the option to work and teach remotely. Furthermore, chronically low wages and reimbursement rates make it difficult to attract and retain providers. Increases in rates are particularly needed for certain types of providers, including those in the APP, those serving children with disabilities, and those living in high-cost regions. Although the state increased reimbursement rates in 2021, some stakeholders noted that the rates increased more significantly for center-based providers than for other types of providers, increasing the disparity in reimbursement between these provider types. In addition, the CA Master Plan and Rate and Quality Workgroup each recommended rate reform to make pay and reimbursement rates more equitable, but it remains to be seen what additional changes the state will actually make. ECE leaders noted that rate reform advocacy has been ongoing for many years with little progress. They recommended working with advocacy groups outside of early learning to educate legislators about the need for rate reform and to hold them accountable.

“Teachers need training so that if a child is going through any sort of trauma, they might be able to identify that, but then also know how to support them.”

– Parent/caregiver focus group participant

Stakeholders were also concerned with the availability of professional development opportunities that consider the needs of providers in terms of language, schedule, financial situation, and skills. For example, providers participating in the focus groups wanted to see more classes and trainings offered in Spanish and available outside of work hours. They also requested access to English language classes to help Spanish-speaking providers advance their education. Providers also wanted to see more trainings count toward a license or credential. To make ongoing professional development more feasible for providers, participants in the focus groups suggested expanding incentives and internship programs that provide ECE staff with paid learning opportunities. These efforts to make professional development more accessible may also help improve the diversity of the workforce.

Providers and parents/caregivers in the focus groups also suggested training topics that are most needed in the ECE workforce. They agreed that ECE professionals need access to more trainings in leadership and working with diverse populations, including infants/toddlers, children with disabilities, and dual language learners. In

“If we do accept a child with special needs, we need extra staff to support. And we want to pay our staff well and so sometimes we cannot afford to hire a new person.”

– Child care provider focus group participant

addition, parents/caregivers were particularly interested in seeing more professional development opportunities that would help providers to address the developmental and social-emotional needs of their children. For instance, they hoped providers would be better able to recognize and respond appropriately to signs of trauma. Participants in the focus groups also expressed concerns that the stress of the work along with low pay adversely impacts the mental health and well-being of ECE staff. In addition to advocating for increased pay, providers and parents/caregivers recommended workshops or counseling services to support ECE providers’ mental health and wellness.

Following the review process, the desired outcome in the Workforce Development area is **a system of career development supports for ECE professionals in all settings (FFN to TK)** and the recommended action is to **expand the Early Childhood Consortium to help all ECE educators identify educational pathways that align with their career goals, promote pathways intended for racially and linguistically diverse working professionals, and provide financial support to offset costs.**

| PRIORITY RANKING | WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT |
|------------------|--|
| 1 | Expand the Early Childhood Consortium to help all ECE educators identify educational pathways that align with their career goals, promote pathways intended for racially and linguistically diverse working professionals, and provide financial support to offset costs. |
| 2 | Advocate for rate reforms, increased reimbursement rates, and other initiatives – especially for infant/toddler programs – to fairly compensate the ECE workforce. |
| 3 | Establish and expand programs that prepare both general and special education early childhood and TK teachers to support the inclusion of children with disabilities through implementing universal design for learning and embedded instruction. |
| 4 | Expand mentorship/internship programs that provide childcare students/trainees with paid learning opportunities. |

Workforce Development Baseline Data

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Action: | Expand the Early Childhood Consortium to help all ECE educators identify educational pathways that align with their career goals, promote pathways intended for racially and linguistically diverse working professionals, and provide financial support to offset costs. |
| Outcome(s): | A system of career development supports for ECE professionals in all settings (FFN to TK) |
| Indicator(s): | Number of ECE organizations in the Early Childhood Consortium Number of stipend scholarships provided to ECE professionals through EPP/QCC programs |
| Baseline Data: | As of September 2023, there were 18 organizations partnering in the Early Childhood Consortium. EPP scholarship and stipend programs enrolled 64 ECE professionals in 2022-23. QCC stipend programs enrolled 1,069 ECE professionals in 2022-23. |

Workforce Development Logic Model

| | |
|---------------|---|
| ACTION | Expand the Early Childhood Consortium to help all ECE educators identify educational pathways that align with their career goals, promote pathways intended for racially and linguistically diverse working professionals, and provide financial support to offset costs. |
|---------------|---|

| PARTNERS | YEAR 1 ACTIVITIES (FY2023-24) | OUTPUTS | OUTCOME |
|--|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educator Preparation Programs (SCCOE) • Childcare Resource & Referral (SCCOE) • LCP • Inclusion Collaborative (SCCOE) • Strong Start (SCCOE) • Early Learning (SCCOE) • CPIN Region 5 • Expanded Learning Region 5 • First 5 SCC • California Association for the Education of Young Children (CAAEYC) • California Kindergarten Association (CKA) • SCC School Districts • SCC Charter Schools • San Jose State University • West Valley & Mission Community College District • Gavilan College • Foothill-DeAnza Community College District • Evergreen & SJCC District | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach to FCCHENS and other ECE Networks • Partner with West Valley & Mission Community College District to sponsor FFN and aspiring CSPP teacher cohorts in completing Child Development Teacher Permits • Launch Early Learning Leadership Administrator Community of Practice and Institutes • Provide ECE teachers (Preschool / TK / K) training in culturally responsive, inclusive, and emotionally healing classrooms that eliminate exclusionary practices and support multilingual learners and their families 2023-24 • Offer TK Academies for new TK Teachers and TK Administrators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of organizations partnering in the Early Childhood Consortium • Number of stipend scholarships to ECE professionals • Number of FFN cohort members obtaining Child Development Permits • Number of SCC school districts participating in Early Learning Leadership CoP and Early Learning Leadership Institutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A system of career development supports for ECE professionals in all settings (FFN to TK) |

Access

Focus Group Feedback: Access

In order to increase childcare access, stakeholders said the county will need to recruit and retain additional qualified staff. Hiring more staff is particularly needed in infant/toddler programs to meet teacher-to-child ratio requirements and yet providers said most job candidates are seeking to work with preschool-aged children. Providers cited additional challenges in recruiting and retaining staff, including the low pay of the job, burnout, and inadequate support for employees' mental health and well-being.

Families and providers also expressed concerns about the affordability of childcare for families, stating that the income eligibility threshold for childcare subsidies is too low. Moreover, families were often unsure what financial assistance they qualified for and found it difficult to complete the subsidy application process. In addition, many parents/caregivers who are undocumented are afraid to share the information needed to apply for a subsidy. Furthermore, many providers are reluctant to accept subsidy payments, as payments can be delayed, and the process can be burdensome.

Childcare access is particularly challenging for children with disabilities. Specific challenges for this group include a lengthy assessment process and lack of staff and services to support children with disabilities in ECE environments. The assessment process can take several months, and public services to support children with special needs are often unavailable. The lack of services is particularly acute for children with mild to moderate disabilities. In addition, parents/caregivers of children with disabilities said that it was difficult to find a program that would accept their child because programs said they were not equipped to support the child, or the child needed to be potty trained. The Childcare Portal allows families to find providers who report that they have experience serving children with disabilities, but relatively few providers have updated their profiles with this information. Additional outreach is needed to encourage providers to report this information in the Portal.

“Preschool is too expensive for me, but I need to work. I found a night job so I can take care of my kid during the day.”

– Parent/caregiver focus group participant



| PRIORITY RANKING | ACCESS TO INCLUSIVE, HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMS |
|------------------|---|
| 1 | Determine and implement changes that make infant and toddler care more sustainable for providers and more accessible for low- and mid-income families. |
| 2 | Advocate for program changes to make childcare affordable for mid-income families. |
| 3 | Continue and expand SCCOE's Steps to Success enrollment campaign to provide parents/ caregivers with up-to-date information on program enrollment options and to highlight program enrollment options for families with children with disabilities. Leverage this program to provide families with information and assistance in accessing childcare subsidies. |
| 4 | Increase the capacity of the Inclusion Collaborative, CPIN, and other supports for providers to implement inclusive opportunities for young children with disabilities in all ECE programs. |
| 5 | Enhance the R&R's ability to track capacity and desired enrollment in ECE programs across the full range of licensed providers. |
| 6 | Expand capacity to provide new and existing ECE providers with opportunities for training and technical assistance. This includes expansion of the CCIP business supports program, development of the Shared Services Alliance, supports for FFN providers, and grants application support. |

Access Baseline Data

| Action: | Determine and implement changes that make infant and toddler care more sustainable for providers and more accessible for low- and mid-income families | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|------------------|--------------|--------|------------|------------------|------|--|---|--|------------------|--------------|-------|------------|------------------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-----|
| Outcome(s): | Increased number of licensed slots for children ages zero to three | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Indicator(s): | Number of licensed slots for children ages zero to three | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Baseline Data: | <p>Number of Santa Clara County Children Who Qualify for a Childcare Subsidy and Number Enrolled in Subsidized Care (2020)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">DEMAND</th> <th colspan="3">SUPPLY</th> <th colspan="2">NEED</th> </tr> <tr> <th>No. of Children 0-3 with Parents in Workforce</th> <th>No. in Working Families under 85% of SMI</th> <th>Licensed Centers</th> <th>Licensed FCH</th> <th>Total</th> <th>Unmet Need</th> <th>Pct. Of Need Met</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>37,913</td> <td>12,613</td> <td>4,302</td> <td>3,394</td> <td>7,696</td> <td>30,217</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: Santa Clara County Child Care Needs Assessment. Note: Number of children who qualify for a subsidy is based on those in families earning less than 85% of the SMI.</p> | DEMAND | | SUPPLY | | | NEED | | No. of Children 0-3 with Parents in Workforce | No. in Working Families under 85% of SMI | Licensed Centers | Licensed FCH | Total | Unmet Need | Pct. Of Need Met | 37,913 | 12,613 | 4,302 | 3,394 | 7,696 | 30,217 | 20% |
| DEMAND | | SUPPLY | | | NEED | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. of Children 0-3 with Parents in Workforce | No. in Working Families under 85% of SMI | Licensed Centers | Licensed FCH | Total | Unmet Need | Pct. Of Need Met | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 37,913 | 12,613 | 4,302 | 3,394 | 7,696 | 30,217 | 20% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Access Logic Model

| | |
|---------------|--|
| ACTION | Determine and implement changes that make infant and toddler care more sustainable for providers and more accessible for low- and mid-income families. |
|---------------|--|

| PARTNERS | YEAR 1 ACTIVITIES (FY2023-24) | OUTPUTS | OUTCOME |
|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCCOE • ECE Providers • First 5 SCC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey providers on barriers to providing care to children ages zero to three. • Determine professional learning and workforce development supports for infant/toddler care. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey findings on barriers to care • List of existing training supports for providers serving zero to three. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of licensed slots for children ages zero to three |

Program Quality

Focus Group Feedback: Program Quality

Although they acknowledged that measuring and supporting program quality is important, ECE stakeholders raised several concerns with QUALITY MATTERS and the QRIS, which rates the quality of providers. The burden of getting high QRIS ratings is placed on caregivers, who are often not given provided proper resources and training to be successful in the program. For example, the QRIS rating system gave higher program quality scores to programs with staff who have college degrees and engage in 21 hours of professional development, but meeting these qualifications is difficult at many sites, due to barriers to professional development (e.g., lack of time and resources to take classes) and high turnover in the workplace. Furthermore, the country’s recent racial justice movements have shifted perspectives on quality rating systems. Concerns regarding systemic racism in the current system have been raised in response to disparities in the quality ratings of providers serving Black and White students. Such disparities highlight the need for further efforts to address equity gaps and ensure that the voices of BIPOC communities are included in improvements to QRIS.

“My main concern is not academics, although it is also important for me, but instead the support my child gets for their social emotional and development.”

– Parent/caregiver focus group participant

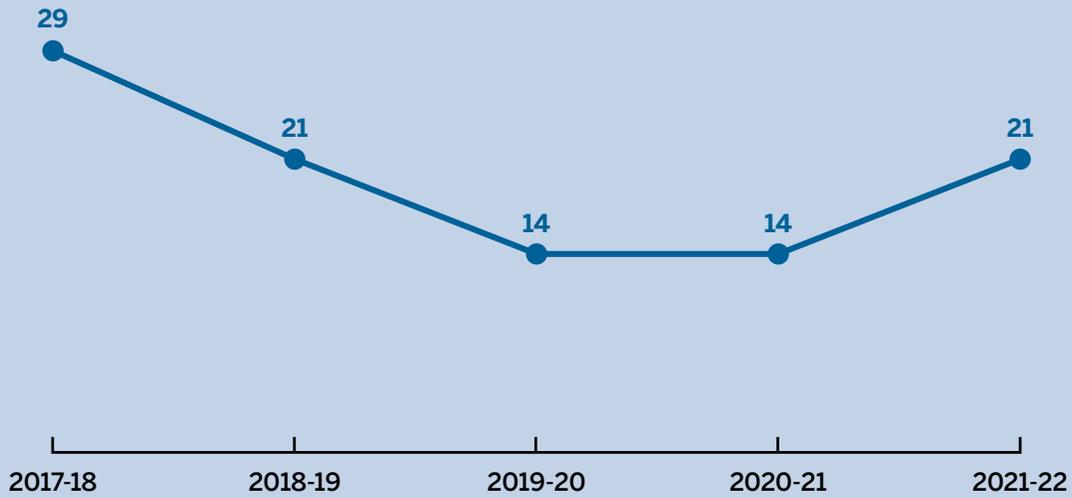
Among ECE providers and parents/caregivers who participated in focus groups, most quality-related concerns centered around the program curricula and the ability of staff to support the developmental needs of children in their care. Parents/caregivers and providers wanted to see programs that offered developmentally appropriate curricula, material, and practices. In particular, some providers raised concerns about the developmental appropriateness of TK programs. Additional coaching and training are also needed so that program staff are knowledgeable and well-prepared to work with diverse groups of students, including students with disabilities.

Parents/caregivers of children with disabilities also desired lower staff-to-child ratios so their children could receive more individualized attention and care. Finally, parents/caregivers said ECE programs needed to concentrate more on developing children’s social and emotional development, rather than teaching academics, especially in the wake of the pandemic, which led to increased social and emotional challenges among children. Stakeholders recommended conducting further research on what would help ECE providers better address children’s developmental and mental health needs.

| PRIORITY RANKING | PROGRAM QUALITY |
|------------------|--|
| 1 | Increase inclusion of children with disabilities by expanding and coordinating access to ECSE and mental health professionals, resources, and other supports (for children and providers) across all care settings. |
| 2 | Ensure professional development around social-emotional learning is available and accessible to ECE providers across systems. |
| 3 | Continue efforts to improve the QRIS process with feedback from all providers, including FFN, to support a provider-driven program planning and improvement model. |
| 4 | Develop tools and resources to expand and align quality improvement efforts to include TK, ECSE, and ELOP, without diverting funds from quality improvement efforts for community-based programs. |



Program Quality Baseline Data

| Action: | Increase inclusion of children with disabilities by expanding and coordinating access to ESCE and mental health professionals, resources, and other supports (for children and providers) across all care settings | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|------|--------------------|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|
| Outcome(s): | Increased number of sites with access to needed special education and mental health supports | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Indicator(s): | Number of California State Preschool Programs that apply for the Mental Health Consultation Services and Adjustment Factor Number of new Early Childhood Special Education credentials | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Baseline Data: | <p>Number of California State Preschool Programs that Applied for the Mental Health Consultation Services and Adjustment Factor (as of June 2023): 3</p> <p>Source: Santa Clara County Office of Education</p>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number of Programs</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2017-18</td> <td>29</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018-19</td> <td>21</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019-20</td> <td>14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020-21</td> <td>14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021-22</td> <td>21</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing</p> <p>Note: Data represent credentials issued through San Jose State University and SCCOE.</p> | Year | Number of Programs | 2017-18 | 29 | 2018-19 | 21 | 2019-20 | 14 | 2020-21 | 14 | 2021-22 | 21 |
| Year | Number of Programs | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2017-18 | 29 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2018-19 | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2019-20 | 14 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2020-21 | 14 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2021-22 | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Program Quality Logic Model

| | |
|---------------|---|
| ACTION | Increase inclusion of children with disabilities by expanding and coordinating access to ECSE and mental health professionals, resources, and other supports (for children and providers) across all care settings. |
|---------------|---|

| PARTNERS | YEAR 1 ACTIVITIES (FY2023-24) | OUTPUTS | OUTCOME |
|--|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion Collaborative • Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) • Local Planning Council (LPC) • San Andreas Regional Center (SARC) • School districts • Non-LEA early learning providers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on existing data, conduct an assessment to understand what ECE providers (including teachers, assistants, and administrators) need to better provide inclusive environments that support the needs of children with disabilities. • Consult with a range of partners, including pediatricians, the Regional Center, and school districts, in the design of the assessment and survey them on what children and families need. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment designed and implemented • Number of study participants, by sector and experience with inclusion • Recommendations based on findings of assessment developed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of sites with access to needed special education and mental health supports |

Family Engagement

Focus Group Feedback: Family Engagement

Stakeholders noted that additional work is needed to fully shift the ECE system towards an asset-based view of families. Moving from “family engagement” to “family partnerships” will require a more culturally and linguistically diverse staff and partnerships with existing networks that are trusted by families. Furthermore, programs need additional staff who can be dedicated to family partnership efforts; this is a significant challenge, as many programs contend with workforce shortages and financial concerns.

Families in the focus groups expressed concerns about the lack of opportunities to be involved in their child’s learning. Few programs include parents/caregivers in decision-making processes and often will offer family engagement opportunities that conflict with the schedules of working parents/caregivers. Stakeholders recommended conducting further research to develop a fuller understanding of how ECE programs can best involve and meet the needs of diverse families, particularly those with children with disabilities.

“I wish I was able to be more involved in my child’s school, but everything happens during my work hours, so that makes it challenging.”

– Parent/caregiver focus group participant

| PRIORITY RANKING | FAMILY ENGAGEMENT |
|------------------|---|
| 1 | Expand efforts to partner with families of children with disabilities by researching their needs, identifying, and expanding the number of early learning programs that are enrolling children with disabilities, and encouraging early intervention providers and special education programs within Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to align family partnership efforts across general and special education. |
| 2 | Reframe the concept of family engagement to family partnerships and share examples of effective family partnership, resources already in use, and opportunities for funding that could support implementing these activities. Ensure partnership opportunities available to families are sensitive to families' culture, language, schedule, and circumstances. |
| 3 | Expand collaborative efforts to implement a “no wrong door” approach for families to access public services, including ECE, child development, health, and human services through initiatives such as FRCs and community schools. |
| 4 | Continue existing community education efforts, such as Steps to Success, on the availability of ECE programs and other services, the importance of supportive ECE experiences, and the role parents/primary caregivers and other caregivers play in children's development. |

Family Engagement Baseline Data

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Action: | Expand efforts to partner with families of children with disabilities by researching their needs, identifying, and expanding the number of ECE programs that are enrolling children with disabilities, and encouraging early intervention providers and special education programs within LEAs to align family partnership efforts across general and special education. |
| Outcome(s): | Increased number of ECE programs that enroll children with disabilities |
| Indicator(s): | Number of programs reporting experience serving children with disabilities Number of programs who have participated in Inclusion training provided by the Inclusion Collaborative |
| Baseline Data: | Data on ECE programs that have experience serving children with disabilities and have participated in Inclusion trainings is currently being collected by the R&R and will be available in the Childcare Portal by the end of 2023. |

Family Engagement Logic Model

| | |
|---------------|--|
| ACTION | Expand efforts to partner with families of children with disabilities by researching their needs, identifying, and expanding the number of ECE programs that are enrolling children with disabilities, and encouraging early intervention providers and special education programs within LEAs to align family partnership efforts across general and special education. |
|---------------|--|

| PARTNERS | YEAR 1 ACTIVITIES (FY2023-24) | OUTPUTS | OUTCOME |
|---|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIRST 5 • Parent groups, including Parents Helping Parents (PHP) • City of San Jose • Inclusion Collaborative • LPC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review results of recently conducted focus groups with families of children with disabilities and design and implement a study to interview, survey, and/or conduct focus groups with these families to fill any gaps in available data on their needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study designed and implemented • Number of study participants, by demographics and location • Recommendations based on findings of assessment developed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of ECE programs that enroll children with disabilities |

Articulation, Alignment, and Data Systems

Focus Group Feedback: Articulation, Alignment, and Data Systems

Stakeholders raised concerns regarding the lack of designated staff to connect elementary schools, ECE programs, and other community-based providers. Providers were particularly concerned about the limited communication, coordination, and alignment between ECE providers and TK-12 systems around developmentally appropriate curricula and classroom practices. Currently, there are few opportunities for ECE providers and TK-12 staff,

“Folks that work with children 0 to 8 need to be on the same page when it comes to developmentally appropriate practices.”

– Child care provider focus group participant

particularly classified staff, to learn together and develop a shared understanding of what is developmentally appropriate for young children. Stakeholders recommended using the PLF as a reference guide for developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) and offering more joint trainings for childcare, preschool, and TK/K staff specifically around DAP for children with disabilities.

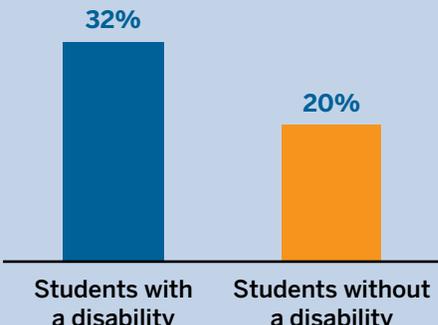
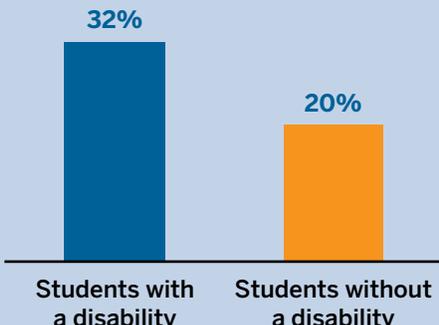
Improved coordination between various systems will also be required to establish unique identification numbers for children at the first point of contact. Also, although some families are comfortable with their child's ECE data being available to the TK-12 system, others expressed concerns

about the possible misuse of that data (e.g., that the data might bias school staff or perpetuate deficit-based views of children and families). Additional trainings will be needed for staff to appropriately understand and use students' data.

Families in the focus groups also reported facing challenges in the kindergarten enrollment process. For example, it was unclear to many providers and families who is eligible for TK because some schools open their TK classrooms to all 4-year-olds. In addition, an all-electronic kindergarten enrollment process is convenient for some families but poses a barrier for parents/caregivers who lack or are unfamiliar with technology. Families and providers also reported that enrollment is more difficult for Spanish-speaking parents/caregivers. Furthermore, the amount of paperwork and requirements for kindergarten enrollment (e.g., proof of residence and vaccinations) is burdensome, especially for families experiencing homelessness. Parents/caregivers wanted more culturally sensitive, multilingual district or school staff available to walk them through the enrollment process.

| PRIORITY RANKING | ARTICULATION, ALIGNMENT, AND DATA SYSTEMS |
|------------------|--|
| 1 | Provide opportunities for ECE and TK-12 staff to communicate and coordinate around developmentally appropriate curricula and practices. |
| 2 | Leverage the implementation of UPK to support articulation and alignment between school districts and ECE providers, e.g., facilitating districts to contract with non-LEA providers to deliver ELOP. |
| 3 | Enhance supports for educators and providers to implement the DRDP as a shared SRA while ensuring that data reporting requirements are aligned to minimize administrative demands on ECE providers and LEAs. |
| 4 | Work with school districts to simplify the TK/Kindergarten enrollment process and provide staff to support families with enrollment. |
| 5 | Expand ECE data importation into DataZone as a key tool to integrate and share information among providers, educators, administrators, and ultimately parents/caregivers – including data that monitors placements and outcomes for children with disabilities. Train providers, educators, and administrators to understand and appropriately use data they receive about students. |

Articulation, Alignment, and Data Systems Baseline Data

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Action: | Provide opportunities for ECE and TK-12 staff to communicate and coordinate around developmentally appropriate curricula and practices. | |
| Outcome(s): | Increased capacity of staff to use developmentally appropriate practices with children with disabilities | |
| Indicator(s): | Suspension rate for K-3 students with disabilities Chronic absenteeism rate for K-3 students with disabilities | |
| Baseline Data: | <p>Suspension Rate for K-3 Students in Santa Clara County, by Presence of Disability (2021-22)</p>  <p>32% 20%</p> <p>Students with a disability Students without a disability</p> <p>Source: California Department of Education</p> | <p>Chronic Absenteeism Rate for K-3 Students, by Presence of Disability (2021-22)</p>  <p>32% 20%</p> <p>Students with a disability Students without a disability</p> <p>Source: California Department of Education</p> |

Articulation, Alignment, and Data Systems Logic Model

| | |
|---------------|---|
| ACTION | Provide opportunities for ECE and TK-12 staff to communicate and coordinate around developmentally appropriate curricula and practices. |
|---------------|---|

| PARTNERS | YEAR 1 ACTIVITIES (FY2023-24) | OUTPUTS | OUTCOME |
|--|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-LEA early learning providers • School districts • Parents Helping Parents (PHP) • Inclusion Collaborative • San Andreas Regional Center (SARC) • ECE Workforce Registry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage cross-training of ECE and TK-12 staff around developmentally appropriate curricula and practices, particularly for children with disabilities, invite ECE providers to trainings offered by districts and invite TK-12 staff (classified and certificated) to trainings held for ECE providers. Use existing training calendars, contact lists, and staff networks to communicate about available trainings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of training opportunities • Number of staff participating in trainings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased capacity of staff to use developmentally appropriate practices with children with disabilities. |

Facilities

Focus Group Feedback: Facilities

Despite recent investments in early learning facilities, there is currently no ongoing, dedicated funding stream to support facilities expansion or improvement. Such a funding stream is essential as LEA and non-LEA providers alike have indicated they lack the resources necessary to expand facilities to accommodate increased enrollment. Although utilizing elementary school spaces for ECE is a possible solution to the shortage of facilities, many sites still need to be renovated to be suitable for young children. For example, one focus group participant whose child attends a preschool on an elementary school site said her child is not able to use the playground, because the play structure

“It would be nice if we had more advocates who understand what we do and could advocate on our behalf in Sacramento or in Washington. Many of us providers don’t have the time to advocate ourselves.”

– Child care provider focus group participant

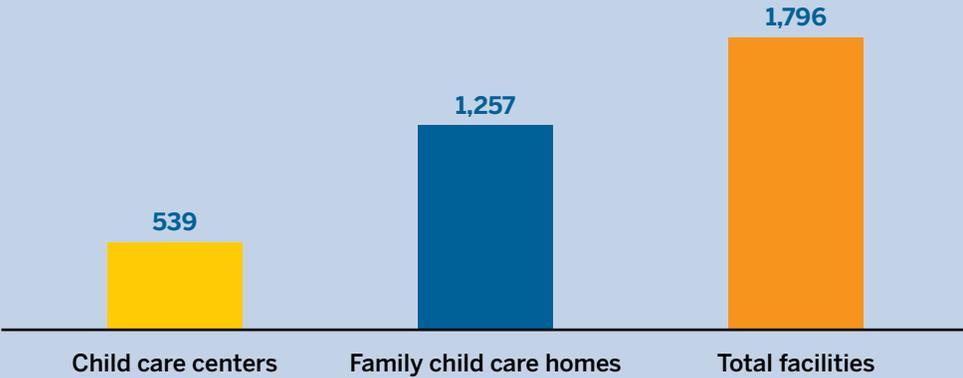
is too big for preschool-aged children. Likewise, repairs and upgrades, including those to make facilities ADA compliant or appropriate for infants and toddlers, are often cost prohibitive for providers operating on thin margins. Furthermore, although some resources have been allocated to support family childcare facilities, there is some controversy around providing home-based programs with resources that could be viewed as personal property enhancement.

Even when funds are available for facilities expansion or enhancement, providers described challenges with accessing and utilizing those funds. For example, the application process for facilities grants is inaccessible for many providers, especially those who are Spanish-speaking and those who do not have experienced grant writers on staff. Providers also noted that even if they had the funds to build or expand, they lack the capacity to conduct community outreach to address neighbor concerns about the perceived impact that facility development or expansion might have on a neighborhood. They said they needed advocates who could communicate with the neighborhood and mitigate such concerns.

| PRIORITY RANKING | FACILITIES |
|------------------|--|
| 1 | Advocate for sustainable financial and technical supports to build and maintain developmentally appropriate and ADA-compliant ECE facilities across the county's mixed delivery system. |
| 2 | Cultivate multi-sector partnerships between ECE providers, LEAs, cities, public agencies, housing developers, businesses, and employers to optimize facilities identification and development for ECE programs and wrap-around care. |
| 3 | Provide facilities technical assistance for LEA, non-LEA, center-and home-based, licensed, and FFN providers through dedicated facilities specialists and warmline services to increase access to infant-toddler and inclusive ECE programs. |



Facilities Baseline Data

| Action: | Advocate for sustainable financial and technical supports to build and maintain developmentally appropriate and ADA-compliant ECE facilities across the county's mixed delivery system. | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----|-------------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| Outcome(s): | Increased number of licensed childcare facilities | | | | | | | | |
| Indicator(s): | Number of licensed childcare facilities, by type | | | | | | | | |
| Baseline Data: | <p>Number of Licensed Child Care Facilities in Santa Clara County (2021)</p>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Facility Type</th> <th>Number of Facilities</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Child care centers</td> <td>539</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Family child care homes</td> <td>1,257</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total facilities</td> <td>1,796</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: California Child Care Resource and Referral Network</p> | Facility Type | Number of Facilities | Child care centers | 539 | Family child care homes | 1,257 | Total facilities | 1,796 |
| Facility Type | Number of Facilities | | | | | | | | |
| Child care centers | 539 | | | | | | | | |
| Family child care homes | 1,257 | | | | | | | | |
| Total facilities | 1,796 | | | | | | | | |

Facilities Logic Model

| | |
|---------------|---|
| ACTION | Advocate for sustainable financial and technical supports to build and maintain developmentally appropriate and ADA-compliant ECE facilities across the county's mixed delivery system. |
|---------------|---|



| PARTNERS | YEAR 1 ACTIVITIES (FY2023-24) | OUTPUTS | OUTCOME |
|--|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCCOE • ECE providers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the Santa Clara County Facilities Needs Assessment, conduct surveys of ECE providers to understand what they need to improve or maintain the quality of their facilities and make them accessible for children with disabilities. Present the findings to a task force to identify recommended next steps to address the needs of ECE providers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey conducted • Number of study participants, by provider type • Recommendations based on findings developed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of licensed facilities |



Table 9: Summary of Actions and Outcomes

| Content Area | Proposed Action | Desired Outcome |
|---|--|--|
| Workforce Development | Expand the Early Childhood Consortium to help all ECE educators identify educational pathways that align with their career goals, promote pathways intended for racially and linguistically diverse working professionals, and provide financial support to offset costs. | A system of career development supports for ECE professionals in all settings (FFN to TK) |
| Access | Determine and implement changes that make infant and toddler care more sustainable for providers and more accessible for low- and mid-income families. | Increased number of children who qualify for a childcare subsidy and are enrolled in care |
| Program Quality | Increase inclusion of children with disabilities by expanding and coordinating access to ESCE and mental health professionals, resources, and other supports (for children and providers) across all care settings. | Increased number of sites with access to needed special education and mental health supports |
| Family Engagement | Expand efforts to partner with families of children with disabilities by researching their needs, identifying, and expanding the number of ECE programs that are enrolling children with disabilities, and encouraging early intervention providers and special education programs within LEAs to align family partnership efforts across general and special education. | Increased number of ECE programs that enroll children with disabilities |
| Articulation, Alignment, and Data Systems | Provide opportunities for ECE and TK-12 staff to communicate and coordinate around developmentally appropriate curricula and practices. | Increased capacity of staff to use developmentally appropriate practices with children with disabilities |
| Facilities | Advocate for sustainable financial and technical supports to build and maintain developmentally appropriate and ADA-compliant ECE facilities across the county's mixed delivery system. | Increased number of licensed childcare facilities |

APPENDIX A: LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS AND MID-IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW

Landscape Analysis and Mid-Implementation Review Team

The Early Childhood Institute (ECI) at San José State University (SJSU) is a collaborative, interdisciplinary network of professional researchers, educators, and community partners working to elevate and impact the field of early childhood. ECI engages in research, program evaluation, training, and advocacy in an effort to promote high quality early learning for all children. The project team comprises faculty from SJSU representing different fields of knowledge within early education.

Dr. Emily Slusser is a faculty member in the Department of Child and Adolescent Development at San José State University. She teaches a range of courses on child development and early childhood education, including courses on quantitative analysis and program evaluation. In partnership with ECI, Dr. Slusser has disseminated findings from several lines of research on cognitive and conceptual development among educators, providers, and other stakeholders in the early childhood community.

Dr. Maria Fusaro is a faculty member in the Department of Child and Adolescent Development at San José State University. Her research has a dual focus on understanding social processes involved in young children's learning and on identifying factors associated with ECE-related beliefs, attitudes, and practices among preservice ECE teachers. Dr. Fusaro's primary research aims to understand the young child's learning within social contexts, and in turn to support the preparation of future ECE educators for providing high quality, supportive learning experiences for young children.

Dr. Andrea Golloher is a faculty member in Special Education at San José State University. Dr. Golloher's scholarly activity examines and addresses barriers to implementing effective inclusive education, recognizing the need to establish educational systems that appropriately respond to all children's learning needs. This includes examining benefits and barriers to inclusion in ECE, issues of collaboration and co-teaching, and a focus on the nexus of research and practice in teacher preparation.

Mid-Implementation Review Methodology

Stakeholder Interviews

First-person feedback from stakeholders was gathered through a series of interviews with ECE leaders and stakeholders. Guided by findings from the ECE landscape analysis and identified in partnership with the SCCOE, a sample of 18 leaders and stakeholders representing various perspectives on ECE in Santa Clara County were invited to participate in brief (~45-minute) interviews with members of the ECI evaluation team. Interviews were facilitated by a member of the ECI leadership team, and accompanied by a graduate student assistant. Interviews were conducted via an online conferencing platform, enabling captioning and/or transcript recording as needed to support accurate and comprehensive notetaking.

Interviews were designed to be semi-structured, with guided opportunities to address specific priority areas as they may align with the interviewee's areas of experience or expertise. The interview protocol (see below) was developed to address progress towards the goals identified in the 2017 ELMP, challenges that have impeded progress, new opportunities that have emerged in light of recent changes to the ECE landscape, and recommendations for achieving ELMP goals, existing or new.

Stakeholder Interview Protocol

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. As we mentioned in our invitation to participate in this interview, we are conducting a mid-implementation review of the Early Learning Master Plan developed and launched in 2017. As part of this process, we are interviewing key participants, representatives, and stakeholders in the early learning community to learn more about the vision for ECE in the county moving forward.

We have prepared a set of 10 questions, setting aside 45 minutes for the interview. With your permission, we'd like to record our conversation so that we can revisit the transcript for additional information or context.

- 1) Please provide a brief introduction of yourself, including your current role in Santa Clara County's Early Learning landscape.
- 2) Were you involved in the development of the ELMP in 2017? If yes, how so? Are you still in contact with workgroup? If not, how familiar are you with the ELMP?

[Review ELMP 2017 Priority Areas and Goals]

We plan to focus this interview on the ____ Priority Area(s), though hope to gather insight across all areas that intersect with your experiences.

- 3) From your perspective, please share any updates relevant to this priority area. Have we made progress towards meeting the delineated goals and objectives?
- 4) Are there any new partnerships, opportunities, resources, or initiatives relevant to this priority area that have arisen since 2017?
- 5) How have recent changes to public policy (provide relevant examples: TK expansion, subsidized care eligibility, increased enrollment of children with disabilities, and changes in reimbursement rates and adjustment factors) impacted your work?
- 6) What are some potential challenges and/or opportunities that may arise as we make progress towards these goals?
- 7) Do you have recommendations for steps to achieve these ELMP goals?
- 8) What is the role of ELMP in your work and where might you see it as useful in the future?
- 9) Are there any other goals or sub-goals you would like to address/see addressed in the ELMP?
- 10) Are there any other stakeholders or points of contact that you would recommend we talk to?

Interview transcriptions and notes were reviewed and coded through an iterative process of listing, organizing, and sorting data to synthesize response trends within and across priority areas. First, a comprehensive inventory of the information was extracted from the interview transcriptions and notes. This step involved capturing key points and quotes from each interview. Then, the project team worked together to identify themes, topics, and concepts that emerged across multiple interviews or within specific priority areas. This information was also sorted to help identify patterns and relationships across different sources.

Landscape Analysis

The evaluation team worked with the SCCOE to access relevant administrative data pertaining to the goals and objectives outlined in the 2017 ELMP, such as district UPK planning surveys, Santa Clara County R&R metrics, and Santa Clara County Child Care Subsidy Pilot reporting. These data are represented in figures and tables throughout the report, alongside information gathered through public records (including US census and data drawn from the California Resource and Referral Childcare Portfolio, CSCCE Dashboards, Redfin/Zillow, and the Office of Special Education Programs Open Data Platform, and a systematic review of archived SCCOE Strong Start agendas and materials).

These data were triangulated with stakeholder feedback to obtain a well-rounded understanding of the county's early childhood landscape. By combining the insights from administrative data and stakeholder feedback, ECI was able to project opportunities and challenges in pursuit of the ELMP goals. The team used this information to formulate recommendations and suggest activities aimed at maximizing new and existing partnerships to enhance early learning across the county.

Supplemental Data Tables

Table 10: Data for Figure 1 Number of children ages 0-5 years in Santa Clara County, projected (ELMP 2017) and actual (US Census).

| | 2018 | 2021 | fj% |
|-------------|---------|---------|------|
| under 2 yrs | 43,289 | 38,237 | -12% |
| 2 years old | 23,474 | 19,787 | -16% |
| 3 years old | 24,158 | 21,033 | -13% |
| 4 years old | 23,929 | 22,874 | -4% |
| 5 years old | 24,838 | 23,818 | -4% |
| total | 139,688 | 125,749 | -10% |

Table 11: Data for Figure 2 Number of children living in poverty in Santa Clara County. (US Census).

| Year | Projected | Actual | Poverty | (%) |
|------|-----------|---------|---------|-----|
| 2008 | 157,000 | – | 15,000 | 10% |
| 2010 | 152,000 | – | 20,000 | 13% |
| 2012 | 143,000 | – | 18,000 | 13% |
| 2014 | 142,000 | – | 12,000 | 8% |
| 2016 | 142,000 | 139,688 | 9,308 | 7% |
| 2018 | 142,000 | – | 6,617 | – |
| 2020 | 141,000 | 125,749 | 7,276 | 6% |
| 2022 | 141,000 | – | 7,936 | – |

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUPS AND ACTIONS/OUTCOMES DEVELOPMENT

Focus Groups and Actions/Outcomes Development Team

Christina Branom, Director of Research and School Readiness. Since joining ASR in 2013, Dr. Branom has designed and implemented kindergarten readiness assessments throughout the country, and as an evaluator for early childhood agencies, she has guided partners through strategic planning projects and evaluation design and implementation. Her work has been published in peer-reviewed journals and presented at national conferences, including the American Educational Research Association annual meeting. Dr. Branom earned her MA in psychology from Stanford University and an MSW and PhD in Social Welfare from the University of California, Berkeley.

Chelsie Hess, PhD, Senior Research Analyst II. Dr. Hess has over 15 years of experience teaching in higher education and conducting program evaluations focused on teacher program effectiveness and community programs serving children and families. Dr. Hess has an MA in School Counseling and previously served as a licensed school counselor for the State of Colorado. She also has a PhD in Educational Psychology, doctoral minor in Applied Statistics and Research Methods, and doctoral specialty in Child Development from the University of Northern Colorado.

Sofia Stepanyan, PhD. Senior Research Analyst. Dr. Stepanyan is a developmental and research psychologist with expertise in behavioral research and data analysis. She has extensive experience using mixed methodologies and multi-informant designs to examine program effectiveness in ECE. Dr. Stepanyan earned her MA and PhD in Developmental Psychology from the University of California, Riverside.

Parent/Caregiver and Provider Focus Groups

A series of virtual focus groups with 18 parents/caregivers and 17 ECE providers were conducted in April 2023 to ensure the voices of these important stakeholders were included in updates to the ELMP. Focus groups with parents/caregivers were conducted separately for English- and Spanish-speaking families, and a third group was held for families of children with disabilities. Similarly, separate focus groups were conducted for center-based, FCCH, and FFN providers. Participants were recruited through the networks of SOMOS Mayfair, Rebekah Children's Services, the Inclusion Collaborative, Parents Helping Parents, SCCOE, and FIRST5 Santa Clara County.

Participants were asked to share their experiences with the early learning system in each of the six priority areas. Their responses to the following questions were summarized and described in this report and incorporated into the 2023 ELMP recommended actions and desired outcomes:

Parent/Caregiver Focus Group Questions

1. What difficulties have you had in getting childcare for your family? What specific difficulties have you had in getting childcare for children 0-3? [Disability group only]: What specific difficulties have you had in getting childcare for your child with disabilities?
2. We know you may not always be able to choose your childcare setting, but for the next questions, think about what you would like to see if you had a choice. When looking for or deciding on childcare, what is most important to you aside from availability and cost? In what ways does what you look for change as your child ages?
3. What features of a childcare program are most important to help your child develop and help them be successful in the program?
4. Many childcare staff are required to take trainings to improve the quality of care they offer. What kinds of trainings do you think they need the most? What topics should be covered?

5. When thinking about the physical features or location of the childcare site, what is most important to you? What makes a site attractive to you?
6. In what ways, if any, have you been involved in your child's childcare program? In what other ways would you like to be involved in the program?
7. If you've had a child enroll in kindergarten or transitional kindergarten, can you tell us about any difficulties you had with the registration and enrollment process? If you haven't had a child enroll yet, can you tell us what kind of information or support you think would be helpful? [Disability group only]: Can you tell us about any difficulties you had in transitioning to an IEP and to services provided by the school district?
8. When your child enters kindergarten or transitional kindergarten, what information about your child or family would you like shared with your child's teacher?

ECE Provider Focus Group Questions

1. What barriers keep providers like you from serving more children if they wanted to? What barriers keep providers from serving more children 0-3? What barriers keep providers from serving more children with disabilities?
2. In what ways, if any, have you communicated or worked with elementary schools and teachers?
 - a. What difficulties have you experienced in communicating or working with elementary schools and teachers?
 - b. What kind of information, if any, have you shared with kindergarten or transitional kindergarten teachers about the children you've served?
 - c. What supports are needed most to help childcare or preschool programs and elementary schools communicate and work together better?
3. What kind of information or support do you think would be most helpful to families as their children transition to kindergarten or transitional kindergarten? What kind of information or support have you offered families and about the transition?
4. What challenges have you experienced in opening or maintaining your facility? What challenges are there in opening and maintaining facilities for children with disabilities in particular?
5. What kind of improvements or changes you would like made to your facility if you had the resources? What kind of improvements or changes to your facility would support access for children with disabilities?
6. What challenges have you experienced in pursuing education or training? What is needed most to help people like you become providers or pursue more education and training?
7. What kind of training or professional development would be most helpful to you? Are there certain populations or issues you would like to see more training on (e.g., disabilities, dual language learners, infant/toddler)?

ECE Leader Survey and Focus Group

A virtual focus group was held in May 2023 with 13 ECE leaders to begin action planning for the ELMP goals. Participants in this focus group represented parent groups, service provider collaboratives, ECE sites, APP agencies, school districts, and the SCCOE. Seven of them had also been interviewed by ECI for the Mid-Implementation Review.

Prior to the focus group, 10 of these leaders responded to an online survey asking them to rank the 2023 ELMP priority areas and recommendations in terms of 1) importance for improving ECE and 2) the ability of county partners to make a significant impact. The results of this survey were presented to participants during the focus group.

Focus group participants were put into two breakout groups to discuss steps for the highest-ranking actions in each priority area (each group was assigned the top actions in three of the six priority areas). The facilitator asked the group the following questions for each action:

PARTNERS: What agencies have a role to play in achieving this goal?

YEAR 1 ACTIVITIES: What is one specific action step we can take towards this goal by July 2024?

OUTPUTS: How will we know we've achieved this step? What data will demonstrate it's been achieved?

OUTCOME: What is a longer-term, community level indicator of success in this area?

When multiple “year one” activities were identified, group participants selected their top action step for inclusion in the plan. Participants’ responses were summarized and included in the logic models in this report to illustrate a theory of change for each goal.

Sample Evaluation Plan

| Priority Area/Action | Year One Action Steps | Type | Indicators | Data Source | Baseline Data |
|--|--|---------|--|--|---|
| Workforce Development Advocate for rate reforms, increased reimbursement rates, and other initiatives – especially for infant/toddler programs – to fairly compensate the ECE workforce. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with statewide advocacy groups (including those outside of ECE) to educate and share data with legislators/ decision-makers on the importance of and need for rate reform. Monitor the activities of the California Rate and Quality Workgroup and partner where possible. Reinstate the Bay Area ECE Legislative Forum, which brought together the Bay Area Local Planning Councils (LPCs). | Process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of advocacy activities (e.g., meetings, presentations, letters written) related to rate reform Number of agencies involved in legislative activities related to rate reform Establishment of the Legislative Forum Workgroup monitored | TBD | N/A |
| | | Outcome | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reimbursement rates, by type of care | California Department of Social Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infant/toddler: \$55-\$120 Preschool: \$54-\$91 School age: \$42-\$62 |

Sample Evaluation Plan

| Priority Area/Action | Year One Action Steps | Type | Indicators | Data Source | Baseline Data |
|--|---|---------|---|-------------|--|
| <p>Access</p> <p>Advocate for program changes to make childcare affordable for mid-income families.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on the success of the Santa Clara County Child Care Subsidy Pilot Program, use data on its impact to influence legislators to continue the program and increase the threshold even further. | Process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of advocacy activities (e.g., meetings, presentations, letters written) related to child care subsidies Number of agencies involved in legislative activities related to child care subsidies | TBD | N/A |
| | | Outcome | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of children who qualify for a childcare subsidy and are enrolled in care | LPC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualified for subsidy: 14,707 Enrolled in subsidized care: 115,655 |
| <p>Program Quality</p> <p>Increase inclusion of children with disabilities by expanding and coordinating access to ECSE and mental health professionals, resources, and other supports (for children and providers) across all care settings.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on existing data, conduct an assessment to understand what ECE providers (including teachers, assistants, and administrators) need to better provide inclusive environments that support the needs of children with disabilities. Consult with a range of partners, including pediatricians, SARC, and school districts, in the design of the assessment and survey them on what children and families need. | Process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment designed and implemented Number of study participants, by sector and experience with inclusion Recommendations based on findings of assessment developed | TBD | N/A |
| | | Outcome | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of CSPP that apply for the Mental Health Consultation Services and Adjustment Factor Number of people with an ECSE credential | CTC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of CSPP that Applied for the Mental Health Consultation Services and Adjustment Factor: 3 Number of New ECSE Credentials in Santa Clara County: 21 |

Sample Evaluation Plan

| Priority Area/Action | Year One Action Steps | Type | Indicators | Data Source | Baseline Data |
|---|--|---------|---|------------------------|--|
| <p>Family Engagement</p> <p>Expand efforts to partner with families of children with disabilities by researching their needs, identifying, and expanding the number of ECE programs that are enrolling children with disabilities, and encouraging early intervention providers and special education programs within LEAs to align family partnership efforts across general and special education.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review results of recently conducted focus groups with families of children with disabilities and design and implement a study to interview, survey, and/or conduct focus groups with these families to fill any gaps in available data on their needs. | Process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study designed and implemented Number of study participants, by demographics and location Recommendations based on findings of assessment developed | TBD | N/A |
| | | Outcome | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of programs reporting experience serving children with disabilities Number of programs who have participated in Inclusion training | Santa Clara County R&R | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data will be available by end of 2023 |
| <p>Articulation, Alignment, and Data Systems</p> <p>Provide opportunities for ECE and TK-12 staff to communicate and coordinate around developmentally appropriate curricula and practices.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage cross-training of early learning and TK-12 staff around developmentally appropriate curricula and practices, particularly for children with disabilities, invite ECE providers to trainings offered by districts and invite TK-12 staff (classified and certificated) to trainings held for ECE providers. Use existing training calendars, contact lists, and staff networks to communicate about available trainings. | Process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of training opportunities Number of staff participating in training | TBD | N/A |
| | | Outcome | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suspension rate for K-3 students with disabilities Chronic absenteeism rate for K-3 students with disabilities | CDE | <p>Suspension Rate for K-3 Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students with a disability: 1.5% Students without a disability: 0.3% <p>Chronic Absenteeism Rate for K-3 Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students with a disability: 32% Students without a disability: 20% |

Sample Evaluation Plan

| Priority Area/Action | Year One Action Steps | Type | Indicators | Data Source | Baseline Data |
|---|---|---------|--|----------------|--|
| Facilities Advocate for sustainable financial and technical supports to build and maintain developmentally appropriate and ADA-compliant early learning facilities across the county's mixed delivery system. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the Santa Clara County Facilities Needs Assessment, conduct surveys of ECE providers to understand what they need to improve or maintain the quality of their facilities and make them accessible for children with disabilities. Present the findings to a task force to identify recommended next steps to address the needs of ECE providers. | Process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey conducted Number of study participants, by provider type recommendations based on findings developed | TBD | N/A |
| | | Outcome | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of licensed childcare facilities, by type | CA R&R Network | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childcare centers: 539 Family childcare homes: 1257 Total facilities: 1796 |



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Participants in Focus Groups

Participants in the parents of disabled children focus group.

Participants in the English-speaking parents focus group.

Participants in the Spanish-speaking parents focus group.

Participants in the center-based providers focus group.

Participants in the family childcare home and family, friends, and neighbors provider focus group.

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|----------|--|
| ADA | Americans with Disabilities Act |
| APP | Alternative Payment Program |
| ARPA | American Rescue Plan Act |
| ASES | After-school Education and Safety Program |
| ASR | American Survey Research |
| BIPOC | Black, Indigenous, and People of Color |
| CAIR | California Immunization Registry |
| CalWORKS | California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Program |
| CCEE | California Collaborative for Educational Excellence |
| CCTR | California General Childcare and Development Program |
| CCIP | California Childcare Initiative Project |
| CDE | California Department of Social Services |
| CDSS | California Department of Social Services |
| CFCC | California Family Childcare Home Network Program |
| CLASS | Classroom Assessment Scoring System |
| CMIG | California Migrant Childcare and Development Programs |
| CPIN | California Preschool Instructional Network |
| CSCCE | Center for the Study of Child Care Employment |
| CSPP | California State Preschool Program |
| DAP | Developmentally appropriate practices |
| DRDP | Desired Results Developmental Profile |
| ECE | Early care and education |
| ELMP | Early Learning Master Plan |
| ELOP | Expanded Learning Opportunities Program |
| ECI | Early Childhood Institute |
| ETK | expanded Transitional Kindergarten |
| ECSE | Early childhood special education |
| ELPN | Early Learning Provider Network |
| FFN | “Family, friends, and neighbors” license-exempt childcare |
| FCCH | Family childcare home provider |
| FCCHEN | Family Child Care Home Education Network |
| FRC | Family Resource Center |
| IDEA | Individuals with Disabilities Education Act |

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|-------|---|
| IEP | Individualized Education Program |
| IEEEP | Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program |
| IHE | Institution of Higher Education |
| KRA | Kindergarten readiness assessment |
| LEA | Local Education Agency |
| LPC | Local Early Education Planning Council |
| LRE | Least restrictive environment |
| MOU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| OST | Out-of-school-time program |
| PDG-R | Preschool Development Grant-Renewal |
| PEELS | Pre-Elementary Education Longitudinal Study |
| PFL | Paid Family Leave |
| PK-3 | Prekindergarten to Third Grade |
| PLF | Preschool Learning Foundations |
| PHP | Parent Helping Parents |
| QCC | Quality Counts California |
| QRIS | Quality Rating and Improvement System |
| R&R | Resource and Referral agency |
| RMR | Regional Market Rate |
| SARC | San Andreas Regional Center |
| SCCOE | Santa Clara County Office of Education |
| SELPA | Special Education Local Plan Area |
| SID | Student identification number |
| SJSU | San José State University |
| SMI | State Median Income |
| SRA | School Readiness Assessment |
| SRR | Standard Reimbursement Rate |
| TK | Transitional Kindergarten |
| TK-6 | Transitional Kindergarten to Sixth Grade |
| TK-12 | Transitional Kindergarten to Twelfth Grade |
| TPEs | Teacher Performance Expectations |
| TTA | Training and Technical Assistance |
| UPK | Universal PreKindergarten. |

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MID-IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW

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