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Commissioner Dartis Delivers Keynote Address At MEES Conference

First 5 Commissioner Carla Dartis expressed her gratitude to nearly 500 participants at the 14th Annual Migrant Education Even Start Conference (MEES) last month. In its efforts to promote family literacy and early childhood education within California's migrant community, MEES conducted workshops and training sessions emphasizing early childhood development.

The MEES conference is a four-day symposium that teaches migrant parents and children English language and literacy skills. It is a home and school-based family service where teachers and paraprofessionals hold classes and visit homes of migrant parents.



State Commissioner Carla Dartis informed the MEES audience that First 5 children are scoring higher than their peers.

Commissioner Dartis delivered a stirring keynote address to the crowd of mostly Latino descent. She acknowledged the hard work and determination of the parents and educators whose efforts have aided more than 25,000 migrant

children and families across the state.

"We know your efforts are making a difference," Dartis assured the audience, "That handprint, those five fingers. The investment of zero to five-- that's real. Without question, children will continue to be our priority."

Dartis pointed to glowing program evaluations indicating that children enrolled in the MEES programs funded by First 5 California are scoring higher than their peers.

Commissioner Dartis remained optimistic despite the budget challenges ahead. She mentioned a \$10 billion proposal by President-elect Barack Obama to create Early Learning Challenge grants for zero to five populations.

"We are at a time of great change and great optimism," Commissioner Dartis stated. "The results of your services and the fundamentals you are giving our children are showing a trajectory that those children are going to beat the odds. We are extremely proud of your accomplishments."

First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry and Chief Deputy Director Diane Levin also attended the conference and expressed thanks to the dedicated MEES staff for their tireless work to serve the needy and providing quality early learning programs for this hard to reach community.

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MEES Workshop Highlights *Sid The Science Kid*

One of the many outstanding workshops conducted at the Migrant Education Even Start (MEES) Conference was one on the PBS Kids educational television program, Sid the Science Kid.

Sid the Science Kid, is a collaborative effort by First 5 California, The Jim Henson Company and KCET Television, designed to build on children's natural curiosity. The program encourages

young children to explore science in their everyday lives.



MEES participants enjoyed the bilingual Sid the Science Kid presentation. They explored the instructional games as shown here on this colorful interactive poster.

First 5 California's Carmen Padilla and KCET Education Department representative Laura Cardenas delivered a fun and informative presentation in both English and Spanish to nearly 50 MEES conference participants.

The workshop provided interactive instruction on best practices for parents and educators on how to get the best results from engaging children in the educational program. Participants received a colorful instructional poster along with a complimentary DVD, that challenged both the parents and children with fun, entertaining and instructional games.

Smiling participants walked away committed to working with other educators and informing them of the value of tuning into Sid the Science Kid and his animated friends on PBS.

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First 5 California Tours First 5 Sonoma County

First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry, Chief Deputy Director Diane Levin, Commissioners David Kears and Carla Dartis and early childhood education administrators climbed aboard "Rosie the Trolley Car" on wheels as part

of a site visit to First 5 Sonoma County November 20.

The group's first stop was the Call Child Development Center at Santa Rosa Junior College. They witnessed a training session of Teachers Acquiring Language Learner Knowledge (TALLK), a program designed to instruct student educators to teach special needs preschool children how to play and learn using multiple languages.

"Many of the young children we saw spoke Spanish at home," Perry said, "This program showed us some ways teachers learned how to teach the children in English, Spanish and any language they may speak at home through a unique version of hands-on training in a preschool setting."



First 5 Sonoma's Jennie Tasheff and First 5 California's Kris Perry watch parents working with their preschoolers at Monroe Elementary School.

First 5 Sonoma Executive Director Jennie Tasheff then led the group to Monroe Elementary School to visit another school readiness class with special needs preschool children. Many of the children's parents helped facilitate the class designed to develop early social, language and brain development skills.

While First 5 Sonoma acknowledged there were too few preschool slots available to meet the demand by young children in the county, their program displayed strong parent participation,

resulting in seamless early childhood development at both school and at home.

Finally, the group visited a state-of-the-art dental facility where the Pediatric Dental Initiative (PDI) provides no-cost, subsidized oral health treatment to low-income families. Many children without dental insurance experience a disease called Baby Bottle Tooth Decay, also known as Early Childhood Caries. This devastating infection occurs when a child's teeth are exposed to sugary liquids, such as formula, cow's milk or fruit juices for an extended period of time.

During the visit, First 5 administrators observed an actual dental surgery on a child performed by a few dedicated oral surgeons at the PDI facility.

The county tour provided an opportunity for First 5 state and county administrators to meet and discuss the various school readiness and healthcare activities outlined in the First 5 strategic plan.

The First 5 Sonoma County hosts included Valerie Brown, Sonoma County Supervisor; Jo Weber, Chair; Joel Gordon, Commissioner of First 5 Sonoma County; Patricia Rendon, Sonoma County Office of Education; Laura Vallejo, Instructor Santa Rosa Junior College; Marta Tilling, School Readiness Initiative; Michelle Rogers, Special Needs Lead Agency; and Viveka Rydell, CEO of the Pediatric Dental Initiative.

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The November *Water Cooler*

More than 100 early childhood educators, administrators and child care advocates attended the Water Cooler forum on November 14 to discuss California's childcare and education funding.

First 5 Executive Director Kris Perry facilitated the meeting and introduced speakers to the Water Cooler participants.

Bob Cherry of the consulting firm Hein, Cherry and

Attore delivered the findings of parent and educators' focus groups. The results indicated the value of childcare, political and policy implications of their research, the importance of specific terminology and parents' needs and best practices.

"We found there is broad support for a children's agenda," Cherry said. "People think that's important. They do not think the state spends enough money on early childhood issues. They think the state should do more, and that's the foundation we should go on."

He mentioned the focus groups fully support preschools, but when they were asked if we should spend more on preschool or more on K-12, the responses were significantly split.

Among the various results of the focus group, Cherry found that childcare was important as a practical need for working parents, rather than a political buzzword for funding and policy decisions.

Rick Simpson, an Education Consultant from Assembly Speaker Karen Bass', office discussed the definition of Proposition 98, how it works and myths that surround its existence.



Rick Simpson, Education Consultant to Assembly Speaker Karen Bass, explained the status of Prop. 98 and clarified how the funding is allocated to California schools.

Prop. 98 was enacted by California voters in 1988 as an amendment to the State Constitution. It was enacted to guarantee a minimum amount of the

state's revenue be spent on K-14 education.

Simpson debunked the myth that Prop. 98 is a special fund of money set apart from the California general fund. The reality is that Prop. 98 provides K-14 schools with a guaranteed funding source that grows each year with the economy and the number of students. The guaranteed funding is provided through a combination of state General Fund and local property tax revenues.

Simpson explained, "Schools are entitled from state and local funds this year the total amount they got from those sources last year, increased for the cost of living and enrollment."

State Commissioner Molly Munger, who is also co-director of the Advancement Project, reinforced the need for advocacy, collaboration and policy consensus-building.

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California Early Childhood Educator Competencies Project

First 5 California and the California Department of Education's Child Development Division (CDD) on November 21 held its first in a series of partnership meetings to develop competency standards for early childhood educators. Expert child development advisors are working to establish early education competencies based on infant-toddler and preschool learning foundations. The standards will equip early childhood educators with vital information to provide exceptional support for a child's development.

Sarah Neville-Morgan, First 5 California deputy director of program management, and Camille Maben, director of the CDD, welcomed the participants to the inaugural meeting.

Peter Mangione, WestEd's co-director of the Center for Child and Family Studies, facilitated the meeting. The advisors represented institutions of higher education, special education, English language learners, Early Mental Health and Zero to Three populations. Everyone shared their

passion for supporting a quality workforce to improve the effectiveness of programs for young children. Marcy Whitebook, director of the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at UC Berkeley, aptly described the group's charge when she asked, "How do you teach someone to do what they need to do to best support children? How do we improve their practice so that kids can get where they need to be?"

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Media Continue to Bite into *Yummy for Your Tummy*



First 5 California's bilingual mini cookbook *Yummy for Your Tummy* is currently being promoted at all Albertsons stores in Southern California, with in-store announcements voiced by Chef LaLa and signage at customer service centers encouraging shoppers to pick up a free copy.

By now, all county commissions should have received their complimentary cookbooks. Parents and caregivers can receive a copy by calling 1-800 KIDS-025 or downloading it from www.first5california.com.

Yummy for Your Tummy has been covered by broadcast, print and online outlets in every major media market in the state as well as in multiple languages.

Additionally, phase one of the rollout included the release of a YouTube video highlighting recent interviews with preschoolers on fruits and vegetables as well as healthy eating tips from

Chef LaLa. More than 570 visitors have watched the video thus far – check it out yourself!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Apos_3cXT70

A new video is now available in Spanish to help raise further awareness of this resource. Take a look:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=2J6omOW3W7g

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County Commissions Introduced to the Wide World of Dads

Several county commission representatives participated in the recent professional development Webinar with a focus on reaching dads. The First 5 California county technical assistance team's presentation provided new insight into the diverse "dad market" and offered fresh strategies for communicating First 5's key messages to this important audience.

Dad Webinar materials are currently available on the county First 5 Intranet site. Future professional development seminars are scheduled for 2009.

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Hands-On Health Van Rolls Into Its Next Phase

The First 5 California Hands-on Health van wrapped up another successful tour at the end of October, reaching more than 20,000 Californians at 39 events in its latest trip across the state.

To continue reaching out to California's children and families in all regions with important health messages, we are exploring options for a Phase 7 tour in the spring.

One of the first steps in our mobile van planning process is to collect event suggestions from county commissions in addition to the recommendations already on file. Because winter weather can pose travel challenges, we are hoping to have the van back on the road in March.

The tentative timeframe for the next phase is March through the end of June. Please submit any event suggestions that occur within this time period to f5countyta@rogerspr.com no later than December 19. In your e-mail, please be sure to include the following information:

Event date*
Event name
Location*
Contact information
Approximate attendance

(*To help ensure accuracy in planning the next tour, please double check event dates and locations as they often change from year to year.)

Please note that based on your suggestions we will evaluate whether we can arrange a cost-efficient tour. The tour's length and dates are subject to change based on suggestions provided.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the First 5 California County TA Team at (310) 552-4101 or email f5countyta@rogerspr.com.

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Advocates Explore Policy to Improve Child Care Facilities

The Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF) held its first Annual Child Care Facilities Conference in Pasadena in late October. LIIF created the conference as part of the Affordable Building for Children's Development (ABCD) initiative's Constructing Connections project, funded by First 5 California. More than 50 participants from 15 counties heard expert panelists discuss innovative strategies that 11 demonstration counties use today to collaboratively develop, finance and support community child care facilities. Conference keynote speaker, First 5 California Commissioner Carla Dartis, presented historical perspectives and discussed the significance of the collaborative community work Constructing Connections employs today.

The panel sessions covered creating land use policies that support child care facilities development; ways to increase local financial investment in child care facilities; building a local support system for child care facility development; and creating advocates for child care facilities development.

As Maria Raff, director of the ABCD Initiative said, "This conference allowed the Constructing Connections counties to share their experience and expertise with counties that are eager to replicate the Constructing Connections model. It was exciting to hear about major systemic changes that Constructing Connections' collaborative teams have accomplished in child care facilities development."

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Expanding Early Education Workforce

In late October, First 5 California Child Development Consultant Cynthia Hearnden facilitated a panel discussion at the California Child Care Resource and Referral Annual Conference in Asilomar, California. The diverse group of panelists discussed interrelationships among the CARES Program, the California Mentor Program, the Power of Preschool Program, and the Resource and Referral agencies.

One of the primary topics of discussion included important strategies to facilitate increased workforce development within the early childhood development field.

Representatives from West Ed's E-3 Institute, First 5 Alameda, Working For Quality Child Care and Bananas Resource and Referral Agency provided input on how they can collaborate to train parents, provide adequate childcare referral service and expand mentor programs for students, parents and new teachers.

An enthusiastic audience actively engaged with the panelists and furthered the discussion through numerous questions and comments. Participants expressed their appreciation for the valuable

information and giving them a better understanding of how all the programs work toward providing safe and affordable childcare and expand the early education workforce.

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First 5 Year-End Wrap-Up

This was a pivotal year for establishing new partnerships. Some of these collaborations helped First 5 raise awareness of critical child development issues in 2008.

Beginning early this year, First 5 California spearheaded corporate partnerships with Westfield, Hobe's, Mervyn's, El Clasificado, Dr. Fresh, and Albertsons, among others, to share important health information with families in places where they live, eat, shop, and play. Together these partnerships were valued at more than \$1 million.

As part of its ongoing childhood obesity prevention campaign, First 5 California collaborated with several notable experts. Thanks to a partnership with renowned chef and nutritionist Chef LaLa, First 5 California launched Yummy for Your Tummy – a free bilingual resource with easy, affordable recipes and health tips for young children and their families. First 5 California also partnered with leading physicians in the Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA) community to help champion its efforts in educating the public about the high percentage of overweight APIA children in California.

We also continued to build partnerships with media. This spring marked the official launch of First 5 California's ongoing partnership with Sacramento's NBC affiliate KCRA-TV with a new monthly segment called First 5's Top 5. We also continued to share critical health and early learning information through our ongoing partnership with Univision – the most watched Spanish-language television network in the nation. And this fall, gospel music fans learned about the *Kit for New Parents* through partnerships with radio stations KTYM in the Los Angeles region

and KDYA in the Bay Area, which included interviews with State Commissioner Carla Dartis.

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