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High-quality preschool programs can significantly reduce the achievement gap in California according to a recent study on the effectiveness of preschool in the state released by the RAND Corporation on May 28. The study also found that approximately half of low-income children are enrolled in preschool compared to 80 percent of children whose families earn more than \$100,000 per year.

Preschool California held a briefing at the State Capitol May 28 to discuss the findings and emphasized that early childhood education is a critical factor in closing the achievement gap and that investing in a high-quality early learning system is essential.



*Lynn Karoly explains results of the RAND preschool study.*

“Preschool is the norm for 4 year olds,” said Lynn Karoly, senior economist at the RAND Corporation. “Unfortunately, high quality preschool is not the norm in California.” However, Karoly applauded First 5 California’s Power of Preschool (PoP) Program in San Francisco and San Mateo

Counties for “operating at a higher level of quality as measured by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) than what has been found for other publicly funded programs in the state and nation.”

The RAND study reports that San Mateo classrooms received higher classroom scores in emotional support scale, student engagement, classroom organization, and instructional support for learning than the scores found for the publicly-funded prekindergarten programs. These classrooms even exceed those measured for the Tulsa, Oklahoma, universal preschool program.

Karoly described the disparate results of children attending preschool with research-based curricula versus schools that do not. In addition, the study found that only 27 percent of preschool-age children received instruction from teachers with a BA or higher education degree in the Early Childhood Education field.

Interpreting the outcomes, Karoly explained, “The achievement gap is manifested by the readiness gap.” The study revealed that youth falling behind in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades are the same youth that received poor or no preschool experience.

Following one of RAND’s recommendations, First 5 California is focused on improving quality by participating on the committee charged with implementing the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), a legislative mandate designed to improve early childhood education in California.

The study is the final report in a four-part series encouraging policymakers to develop high quality early learning systems, maximize new federal investments, and act on the RAND recommendations to create high quality programs to increase school readiness for the state’s youngest learners. For more information, including a link to the RAND study, visit [Preschool California](#)

at <http://www.preschoolcalifornia.org/rand>.

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## **California Head Start Prepares for Expansion**

Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) advocates are pleased that the Office of Head Start at the Federal Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families released the highly anticipated Request for Proposal (RFP) May 8.

The RFP was created as a result of the multi-billion dollar federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to expand and improve early childhood education through Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

This RFP process is competitive and each application will be ranked (within the state) for those limited funds. The Office of Head Start notes EHS funds under this RFP are “solely for the purpose of serving additional Early Head Start pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and their families and are not to be used to enhance existing services or convert Head Start enrollment to Early Head Start enrollment.”

Anticipating this competitive Early Head Start funding opportunity, First 5 California in partnership with Preschool California, WestEd, and the California Head Start Association began preparation several months ago.

Two Webinars and five regional workshops were held during April and May to help prospective applicants understand the competitive nature of the process as well as the unique program features, including administration, policy, reporting requirements, fiscal issues, and program quality. These efforts were designed to assist agencies in preparing quality and competitive applications and to help agencies determine their level of preparedness for this unprecedented expansion

opportunity. Some 26 states and more than 700 individual organizations participated in the two Webinar sessions.

On June 15, a third webinar will provide an overview of the key elements of the Request for Proposals process and aims to assist those unfamiliar with writing federal grant proposals. Suzanne Burns, senior development associate at WestEd, will discuss the best approach to drafting proposals for federal grants including some concrete examples to support participants in writing compelling RFPs. Scott Moore, senior policy advisor at Preschool California will support participants in understanding the allocation of resources related to fiscal budget development.

WestEd, First 5 California and their partners are currently developing an informational RFP Webinar with a focus on braided and blended funding. For additional information, contact Kimberly McDaniel at First 5 California [kmcdaniel@ccfc.ca.gov](mailto:kmcdaniel@ccfc.ca.gov) or (916) 263-1306.

Head Start applications must be submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services June 23 by 1:30 p.m. PST. Early Head Start applications must be received by July 7 at 1:30 p.m. PST.

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### **Water Cooler Network Getting Stronger Together**

Reminding early childhood advocates and supporters it has been just more than a year since convening the first Water Cooler meeting, First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry welcomed 120 participants to the most recent meeting since the inspiring two-day Water Cooler Conference in March.

“We’ve been meeting and getting to know one

another's advocacy," Perry said during the meeting at the Department of Health Services May 14. "Now we are beginning the process of developing different ways to work together better on behalf of children from birth to five."

The Water Cooler meetings, hosted by the Advancement Project and First 5 California, were organized originally to provide an informal place where people who are supportive of early childhood issues can focus on creating an effective shared effort to promote early learning for children.

The Water Cooler morning session highlighted the outcomes of the Federal Information and Opportunities Workgroup meetings lead by First 5 California and Preschool California. First 5 California Deputy Director Sarah Neville-Morgan framed the session with her statement about the workgroup's mission: "The Federal I & O group came together to increase California's preparedness for the infusion of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds into the state in the absence of an Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)."



*Water Cooler topics included strategies to improve quality early learning and leveraging federal stimulus funds.*

Neville-Morgan said the Federal I & O meeting participants began a discussion on an early learning framework that "moves us from vertical to horizontal thinking - allowing us to work across the funding streams and agency silos, to develop a plan of action that reflects a vision of what we want

to accomplish around 0 to 5 in the next few years.”

Each of the ARRA subcommittees--*Child Care Development Block (CCDB) Grant, Head Start, Early Head Start, Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA), Title I and Race to the Top*--gave a brief overview of their past and current activities.

Following ARRA subcommittee reports, Washington D.C. representatives Catriona McDonald from Linchpin Strategies and a consultant with the First 5 Years Fund and Ruth Friedman from the House Committee on Education and Labor gave a federal update on the Early Learning Challenge Grants. Friedman stated that this Request for Proposals (RFP) would not likely be available until next year.



*Joya Chavarin, project director from WestED, discussed Early Head Start Technical Assistance for ARRA funds.*

The late afternoon session included a presentation by Gail Gronert, a special assistant to Assembly Speaker Karen Bass. Gronert provided a brief update on the overall state budget and the May revise.

Perry ended the session with a discussion about the excitement around the establishment of an Early Learning Quality Improvement System Advisory Committee (Senate Bill 1629) and how it presents a great opportunity to shape our future early learning system. Once established, the system will provide a framework to improve the quality of early learning education for children 0 to 5 in California.

The next Water Cooler meeting will be held in November.

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### **Implementing Quality Findings for Youth With Special Needs**

“No other state has a dedicated fund source solely for programs benefitting children 0 to 5,” stated Dr. Dean Fixsen a specialist in Human Services at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, in reference to California’s commitment to children with special needs.

Fixsen addressed more than 100 participants at the First 5 California Special Needs Project (SNP) symposium at the Citizen Hotel in Sacramento, May 29. The symposium was the last in a four-year series that included topics ranging from inclusion to sustainability.



*Kris Perry delivered an inspiring keynote address to close out the final Special Needs Symposium*

“We have learned from you (SNP Demonstration sites) throughout this project and will embed what we’ve learned in our future programs and policies,” said First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry.

The May event was entitled *From Implementation to Sustainability Part 2: Accomplishments, Reflections on Learning, and a Look to the Future*. The focus was on innovative practices to optimize healthy development in children with special needs.

Attendees included representatives from state agencies/organizations and field leaders from throughout California, as well as county SNP and First 5 staff and local community partners.



*Dr. Dean Fixen and Michael Fuller attended the final SNP Symposium at the Citizen Hotel in Sacramento.*

Representatives from the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute provided the closing remarks focusing on building social capital through the implementation and sustainability of quality early childhood programs.

At this culminating SNP Symposium, participants reviewed statewide data from the ten county demonstration projects, learned about the history of the SNP, and heard demonstration sites discuss how they plan to continue the implementation of successful practices into the future.

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### **Improving Education Outcomes for Migrant Workers and their Families**

The rural sectors of California are carved into 23 migrant regions forming a community of seasonal workers and families with limited educational services.

With the support of First 5 California and technical assistance from TROMIK Technology Corporation and WestEd, the Migrant Education Even Start (MEES) Data Collection System is now fully operational.

The MEES Data Collection System is a report released in April summarizing results of quality early care and education services to nearly 17,000 migrant and seasonal agricultural worker families. These hard-to-reach and at-risk populations would not have received these services without the support of First 5 California.

Additionally, the report indicates that MEES staff provided over 272,000 hours of field service during 2008-09. Recent evaluation data also show the importance of investing early in quality care and evidence of generated dividends, improved children's readiness for school, and decreased numbers of children needing special education

services.

MEES staff worked to establish stronger collaboration with Migrant Head Start Programs to increase and improve services while taking advantage of the federal economic stimulus dollars.

On June 25, Migrant Head Start representatives will meet to strategize and strengthen their partnership at the MEES Coordinators meeting in Sacramento.

MEES field staff use several assessment tools to enhance efforts and better demonstrate the cognitive and social-emotional development gains of children ages 0 to 5. These include the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS), and the Test de Vocabulario en Imágenes Peabody (TVIP); which is the Spanish version of PPVT for 4-year-old children who will be entering kindergarten. They also use the Brigance assessment tool for children ages 0 to 5.

First 5 county commissions provide additional support to the 23 migrant regions. By working together and forming new partnerships, MEES continues to enhance the lives of migrant children and their families.

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## **Developing a High Quality Workforce**

Developing high quality standards is a critical component of early childhood education (ECE). In 2005, the Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP) was created to develop a lower-division college course of study constructed on an evidence-based foundation of teaching competencies.

On April 24, First 5 California consultant Cynthia Harden attended a CAP Advisory Committee meeting in Sacramento to discuss how the project has progressed toward its goal of achieving a

higher quality workforce in the early childhood field of study. This project is being supported in FY 08/09 through First 5 California funding. First 5 California has participated on the Advisory Committee since the inception of this effort.

Meeting topics included, “What does it take to prepare ECE professionals?” “What are the biggest challenges to creating an integrated professional development system in California?” and “How does CAP fit in?”

Participants also discussed the status of a 2008 recommendation to adopt eight lower division courses by 108 California colleges. CAP titled the courses, *The Lower Division 8*. Those courses include Child Growth and Development; Principles and Practices of Teaching; Child, Family and Community; Introduction to Curriculum; Observation and Assessment; Health, Safety, and Nutrition; Teaching in a Diverse Society; and Practicum (Field Study).

The courses each present an overview, providing evidence, and research considered to be essential aspects of teaching competence.

To date, 77 of the 108 colleges are in the process of adopting *The Lower Division 8*. This is the first time colleges in California have attempted to align their coursework.

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### **A Place of Our Own and Los Niños en Su Casa Launch Fifth Season**

The award-winning PBS series *A Place of Our Own and Los Niños en Su Casa* moved into their fifth seasons launching several new episodes highlighting topical issues related to raising children under age five.

With support from First 5 California and produced by KCET-TV, the informational series provide

practical advice for child care providers in both English and Spanish.

The new season five episodes will emphasize the *Importance of Dads in Children's Lives* (June 1). The program looks at the impact fathers have in their children's lives and suggests creative ideas for strengthening father-child bonds. *Dads and Breastfeeding*, (July 8) explains the role dads can play in supporting their wives and partners contributing to the health of their children.

From June 22 to 26 the episodes turn to *Coping with Economic Insecurities*. The series will air five episodes featuring experts discussing how parents can cope with tough financial times and offering advice on family budgeting.

The series has been honored with numerous awards, including the 2006 Peabody Award and a Parents' Choice award for both the series and Web site.

On June 26 the series will be honored once again at a ceremony hosted by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) in Maryland. NAFCC delivers its child care advocate award annually to an organization that demonstrates extraordinary support from outside of the direct field of early childhood education.

"We like to honor organizations that strengthen the field of early childhood education," said Suzanne Williamson, president of NAFCC. "But we like to highlight organizations whose primary mission is separate but related to family child care."

*A Place of Our Own* and *Los Niños en Su Casa* provide English- and Spanish-speaking parents and caregivers of preschool age children practical advice on raising children who are socially, emotionally, and physically ready to enter and succeed in school.

Williamson said the program highlights the

community support offered by child care providers and is critically needed by families with infant children. “These television programs can reach people we often cannot and ultimately have a lasting impact on our communities,” she said.

Please check local PBS listings for air times in each market. A *Place of Our Own* can be found on the internet at <http://aplaceofourown.org/> and *Los Niños en Su Casa* can be found at <http://www.losninosensucasa.org/>.

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### ***Family Resource Express* Reaches Thousands of Families**

First 5 California’s *Family Resource Express* continued its tour in May, helping families access free and low-cost health resources for their young children. After spending two months visiting WIC centers, libraries, and community and citywide events, the *Family Resource Express*, also known as the *Hands on Health Van*, reached nearly 35,000 people.



*First Lady Maria Shriver officially opened the edible garden on the State Capitol lawn during her WE Garden event in May.*

Among many tour highlights, the *Family Resource Express* took part in First Lady Maria Shriver's groundbreaking ceremony establishing an edible garden at the California State Capitol on May 21. During the WE Garden event, more than 1,200 children and families visited the van.

Another highly-anticipated event was the *Family Resource Express* Mother's Day visit to the Phillips Temple C.M.E. Church in South Los Angeles. First 5 California leveraged an existing partnership with Los Angeles' top urban contemporary radio station, *KJLH*, to promote the event on-air. *KJLH* joined the van at the church along with Children's Dental Health Services, which offered kids free dental screenings, and Great Beginnings for Black Babies, which advised parents on prenatal care.



*Valeria Reyes, age 4, shows off fresh fruits near the Family Resource Express*

Other *Family Resource Express* visits in May included stops at the L.A. Marathon, the Salvation Army's Hope Fair in the San Fernando Valley, the

*Día del Niño* event at the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach, and the popular Koreatown Plaza in Koreatown.

As First 5 California's *Family Resource Express* impacts one family at a time, the staff often receives heartfelt thanks from countless parents and caregivers throughout the state.

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### **Get All A-Twitter Over Tweets**

Hundreds of followers have signed up to access First 5 California's Twitter feed. Through real-time updates, fans can get the latest information on the *Family Resource Express* tour, including event information and photos. "Tweets" also highlight parenting tips, important resources, and new early childhood development research.

You can follow First 5 California's Twitter feed here at <http://twitter.com/first5ca>.

You also can stay current on First 5 California news by becoming a "fan" on Facebook. For Spanish-language updates, visit MySpace Latino and Mi Todobebé.

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