



The County Connection

IN THIS ISSUE

[Preschool Site Visit - A Powerful Experience](#)

[Early Head Start Regional Workshops](#)

May 2009

[Early Head Start Expansion Technical Assistance](#)

[Harnessing Federal Assistance](#)

[Positive Outcomes Reported at State Commission Meeting](#)

[First 5 California Reaches Spanish Speakers with Smoke-Free Messages](#)

[Honoring California Child Care Providers](#)

[Family Resource Express Brings Help to Families in Need](#)

[Follow First 5 California on Twitter](#)

[Asian-language Kit for New Parents](#)

Preschool Site Visit - A Powerful Experience

McKinley Child Development Center in Santa Clara County serves as a model program, preparing young children to enter school confident and ready to learn.

First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry and members of her executive team, including Deputy Director in charge of the Program Management Team Sarah Neville-Morgan and Chief of Legislative and Government Affairs Marsha Jones, visited the center April 16. They were accompanied by FIRST 5 Santa Clara Executive Director Jolene Smith, Community Program Director Cathy Andrade and WestEd E3 Institute's Director Yolanda Garcia.

A representative from State Senator Elaine Alquist's office also participated in the site visit, as well as representatives from the offices of Assemblyman Jim Beall and Assemblyman Joe Coto.



Jonathan and his classmates enjoy the benefits of quality preschool due to First 5 California's PoP programs.

The visitors walked through the preschool, observing children using their gross motor skills, negotiating their tricycles around a path, dipping measuring cups into a water table and painting vivid artwork on a plexi-glass screen.

“We’re here to see how it all happens,” Perry told the administrators as they watched the children engaging in hands-on math games and building on their concept knowledge. During the visit, teachers took time to ask and answer questions and comment on the children’s activities.

The discussion focused on policy that contributes to the success of the preschool. The host administrators, including Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools Charles Weis, pointed to the unique collaborative of different organizations that utilize a distinctive model of "braiding" funds to increase space and deliver quality early learning services.

Jolene Smith referenced the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding when she

acknowledged optimism about providing continued quality early learning services. “Where we are today is a milestone,” she said. “We now have an opportunity with the federal expansion dollars and the ability to bring this type of experience to the vast number of children still waiting.”

“Today, we witnessed true learning in action,” Perry concluded at the end of the daylong site visit, “It was rewarding to provide assistance to Early Head Start and see first hand how well they are doing with the resources they currently have.”

[back to top](#)

Early Head Start Regional Workshops

First 5 California conducted its first Early Head Start (EHS) Regional Workshop during its visit to Santa Clara County. The group provided consultation and assistance in leveraging ARRA funding. The goal is to expand enrollment and accept more children in need.



First 5 Executive Director Kris Perry spends a learning moment with Anthony at McKinley Child Development Center.

The visiting team also toured the neighboring Family Resource Center, supported by First 5 California’s School Readiness program. The group watched mothers singing to their children and helping the toddlers with math games as staff provided suggestions and feedback to the parents.

In addition, they explored the Santa Clara County mobile children’s health clinic. The spacious, child-friendly vehicle provides primary health and dental care services

to children with the least access to comprehensive healthcare.

Santa Clara County host administrators also discussed their collaborative efforts to offer fresh fruits and vegetables to families who reside in neighborhoods where these items are not offered by grocery stores.

[back to top](#)

Early Head Start Expansion Technical Assistance

First 5 California, in collaboration with WestEd, Preschool California and the California Head Start Association, recently created opportunities for the Early Head Start (EHS) Expansion Training. The goal of this partnership is to provide information and technical assistance (TA) to help organizations develop strong EHS funding proposals. This technical TA is divided into three phases:

Phase I was conducted April 7 and April 9 and consisted of two EHS Webinars with a total of more than 650 participants both days. The Webinars can be obtained at Schoolsmovingup.net. These informational seminars provided participants with an overview of the EHS requirements covering topics from staffing qualifications, program performance standards, and finances. Twenty-six states participated on the calls representing a wide range of professions including Head Start managers, literacy coaches, district office fiscal analysts, parent educators, university faculty, city administrators, research and development directors and more.

Phase II consists of five regional workshops. The first workshop began with a session in Santa Clara County on April 16. The final workshop will take place May 15 in Fresno County. These workshops are designed to provide more in-depth assistance for participants to write a successful application for federal funds. Most of these workshops are full but interested parties are encouraged to contact Eva Gorman for additional information at 415-289-2315 or egorman@wested.org.

Phase III is scheduled for May 15 through June 30 and includes intensive one-on-one support for participants who are writing applications for funding. For additional information, please visit the First 5 California Web site at www.cfc.ca.gov or contact Joya Chavarin at 415-289-2339 or jchavar@wested.org.

[back to top](#)

Harnessing Federal Assistance

First 5 California continues to serve as a primary conduit for bringing together early childhood learning organizations to develop strategies to secure funding from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA).

First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry facilitated the third meeting of the Federal Issues and Opportunities Workgroup April 27. This informal workgroup is a collaborative effort organized by First 5 California and Preschool California.

Perry welcomed the meeting participants with a reminder of their purpose and goal. "We brought this group together to increase California's preparedness for the infusion of ARRA funds coming into the state," she said.



State Commissioner Molly Munger listens to First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry welcoming participants to the workshop.

Providing a visual display of their goals, Perry showed a matrix developed by First 5 California that outlined ARRA funding streams over the group's goals of improving 0 to

5 programs and delivering a sustained workforce development as a way of moving toward a high quality early learning system.

The meeting also featured two speakers with experience in working with the federal government and with a keen understanding of policy procedures required to obtain ARRA funding. Elliot Regenstein, a partner at Education Counsel LLC, and Nancy Shier, director of the Ounce of Prevention Fund, provided vital information about early learning funding streams and the necessary steps to bring such funds to California.

Six subcommittees, focusing on Child Care and Development Block Grant, Head Start/Early Head Start, Individuals with Education Act (IDEA), Title I, and Title IIA and Stabilization funds, were formed from previous workgroups. These workgroups provided follow up reports to generate best plans for obtaining ARRA funding.

The meeting concluded with participants urging First 5 California to continue its efforts as a leading organization in the coordination among early learning agencies and stakeholders for critical ARRA funding.

[back to top](#)

Positive Outcomes Reported at State Commission Meeting

While the state budget poses myriad challenges, many First 5 California programs continue to experience positive results for the state's youngest children.

Leaders from various First 5 California partner groups reported on the status of their collaborations, delivering much needed good news to the state commissioners at the April 29 meeting in Sacramento.

Guest speakers included First 5 San Mateo County Commissioner Jean Holbrook, First 5 Santa Clara County Commissioner Kim Roberts, Statewide Children's Health Initiative Association Chair Amy Carta, WestEd

Center for Child and Family Studies Co-Director Peter Mangione, and The David and Lucile Packard Foundation-Children, Families and Communities Program Director Lois Salisbury.



Lois Salisbury shared valuable information about federal funding for early learning and health care.

First 5 San Mateo County Commissioner Jean Holbrook discussed the prospect of acquiring federal funding to expand the amount of space available for children ready for preschool. Holbrook commended First 5 California for its assistance in implementing the Power of Preschool (PoP) demonstration program.

“We’ve been able to expand and augment classroom space and provide quality services,” she said, “We now have 3,300 children, and 90 percent of them come from families that have an income of less than \$42,000 per year.”

Holbrook told commissioners San Mateo County’s quality services include child development screening and assessment, training and technical assistance, and early childhood mental health consultation.

Early childhood brain development expert Peter Mangione delivered an engaging presentation reinforcing the importance of social-emotional development in children at their earliest stages of life. He discussed sensory perception and told commissioners, “At about 8 months, children begin to act upon impulses.”

He added, “At about 18, months children respond positively to limits set by adults and respond to help to

control behaviors.” After showing a video that clearly illustrated with real children what the research reported, he articulated the importance of working with children on these skills early to have the most effective impact.



Peter Mangione, co-director of the WestEd Center for Child and Family studies delivered an intriguing presentation on brain development in young children.

First 5 Santa Clara County Commissioner Kim Roberts and Amy Carta, Chair of the Statewide Children’s Health Initiative (CHI) Association also reported positive news, telling commissioners there has been a significant increase in children who now have health insurance in California.

“The goal,” Roberts said, “is simple but mighty: to provide 100 percent of children up to age 19 with access to health insurance.”

With First 5 California's assistance, Roberts indicated the focus is on providing health insurance, cultivating partnerships and aggressive fundraising. As a result of that focus she said the number of Santa Clara County’s uninsured children went from 71,000 to 18,000 in just a few years.

First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry made the final presentation, imploring all involved to continue working hard together. She discussed a series of recent activities, including the Water Cooler Conference, the successful progress of the committee developing a Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), Educare,

and her recent site visit to Santa Clara County. She also thanked her Program Management Team for organizing the federal stimulus preparedness workshops.

Perry told the state commissioners, "We are still excited about continuing to serve as the example of how working together makes us stronger and more effective. We continue to work with foundations, scientists and our partners and look forward to what's next."

[back to top](#)

First 5 California Reaches Spanish Speakers with Smoke-Free Messages

First 5 California's multicultural smoking cessation awareness campaign is in full swing. Spanish-language media has been particularly receptive to smoke-free messages, with news coverage expected to reach over two million Spanish speakers in the coming weeks.

In April, Communications Director Elisa Bupara championed the cause on segments for *Univision's* Costa Central and Fresno stations as well as its San Francisco radio station *KLOK-AM*. One of her recent interviews on *KRZZ-FM* in San Francisco dedicated a full 1/2 hour to the smoking cessation campaign. *KUBO-FM* Radio Bilingue in Fresno and *Univision's* San Francisco's "Encuentro en La Bahía" also interviewed Bupara about the dangers of secondhand smoke around young children and the importance of quitting the habit.

[back to top](#)

Honoring California Child Care Providers

Individuals charged with caring for our most precious resources - our young children - were honored April 21 at the State Capitol.

First 5 California and KCET public television provided special recognition to nine California child care providers for their extraordinary service to our state's youngest children and the critical assistance they provide to

parents.

“Day after day, they are the ones who provide quality child care services to our children and help them develop the skills they need for a great start in life,” said Kris Perry, Executive Director of First 5 California.



Eunice Rios (center) was honored for her extraordinary work as an exceptional child care provider.

Each honoree proudly accepted accolades on stage from members of the California Legislature and certificates from KCET and KVIE, Sacramento's local Public Broadcast Station (PBS) affiliate.

Awardees included, Denise Parks of San Francisco, Eunice Rios of San Diego, Marsha Ahrens of Lakewood, Wendy Walter of Eureka, Paz Ojeda of Sherman Oaks, Graciela Avila of Santa Ana, Lourdes Schallock of Vacaville, Percy Hayeter of San Francisco and Wendy Waugh of Redding.



Day Care Providers from throughout the state were honored on the Capitol Lawn in Sacramento

The honored child care providers were chosen for their

extraordinary service and special skills. They often overcome adversity to make sure the child's needs are met. Ms. Waugh cares for children from abusive homes and children with special needs. She says she can't imagine doing anything else.

Ms. Ojeda, originally from Chile, uses her unique bilingual skills to give children the ability to communicate in both Spanish and English. She also enriches them with classical music and the exploration of nature and animal life in their surrounding environment.

Mr. Haytor takes pride in serving as the primary day care provider for his grandchildren. He engages the children in regular visits to museums and parks throughout his beloved city of San Francisco. He was especially surprised at being honored for doing what he enjoys so much. "I thought it was wonderful," he said. "I didn't know anyone cared. It was uplifting and all the hosts were warm and personable."

KCET sponsors the annual Day Care Providers Award ceremony with the assistance of First 5 California, BP, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and KVIE public television.

[back to top](#)

***Family Resource Express* Brings Help to Families in Need**

With the recession deepening and an increasing number of families experiencing financial hardship, First 5 California transformed its traveling health exhibit into the *Family Resource Express* to help families access free and low-cost health resources for their children.

Since April, the *Family Resource Express* has been traveling throughout Southern California connecting families to health insurance enrollment assistance as well as distributing grocery coupons and First 5 California's healthy recipe booklet *Yummy for Your Tummy*. The *Family Resource Express* also offers free children's dental, vision and hearing screenings at select

events through partnerships.



Nathton and Kempton Garcia enjoyed the Family Resource Express' fun activities at the Mariachi Festival.

Just weeks into this outreach effort, the *Family Resource Express* has already made an impact, reaching thousands of parents and their young children. One of the most highly anticipated visits was the popular *KJLH* Easter Eggstravaganza in Los Angeles. *KJLH* reported an attendance of approximately 20,000 people – including roughly 12,000 children – at this year's event. Parents visiting the *Express* received important health information, while children were kept busy with educational games about healthy eating, and proper dental hygiene among other subjects.

First 5 California's *Family Resource Express* will be burning the rubber through May, with visits to community and citywide events, WIC centers and libraries. The message is simple for these tough economic times: First 5 California is here to help!

[back to top](#)

Follow First 5 California on

twitter

First 5 California has taken another stride forward in the world of Web 2.0 by joining the popular social networking site Twitter.

Gaining a rapidly growing number of followers, the feed consists of real-time updates about First 5 California's *Family Resource Express* tour, including event information and photos. "Tweets" also include parenting tips and links to important resources for families.

If you're not yet on Twitter, here's a good reason to join! You can follow First 5 California's Twitter feed here at <http://twitter.com/first5ca>.

[back to top](#)

Asian-language Kit for New Parents

During these tough economic times, money to pay for parenting books and classes becomes scarce. Now, it's more important than ever to let parents and caregivers know that free educational resources like the Asian-language *Kit for New Parents* are available.

First 5 California created the *Kit* in four Asian languages – Mandarin, Vietnamese, Cantonese and Korean. This free resource is an important parent education tool for California families and child care providers.

The *Kit* provides practical information in an easy-to-use, linguistically and culturally diverse manner to help build parents' confidence as they make the transition into parenthood.

The Asian-language Kit can be obtained by calling the following Asian-language contact numbers: (800) 597-9366 for Mandarin or Cantonese; (800) 597-9511 for Korean; or (800) 597-9855 for Vietnamese.

[back to top](#)