



AGENDA ITEM 10

DATE OF MEETING: October 21, 2009

ACTION: X

INFORMATION: _____

Gaps in Quality Early Learning for Children 0 to 5 and Their Families, Project Legacy and Federal Leveraging Opportunities

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

The Project Legacy process is now complete and First 5 California staff recommends that the State Commission approve the Measurable Program Goals (MPGs) and Program Concepts resulting from the Project Legacy process (Exhibit 1). Staff will use the MPGs and the early learning Program Concepts to develop quality First 5 California Signature Programs with measures to ensure accountability to prepare California's most vulnerable children for success in school.¹

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

The Project Legacy Process:

July 15, 2009, marked the beginning of the streamlined Project Legacy process, which included:

- a panel of parents and experts from early childhood health and education;
- public input sessions attended by educators, parents and early care and health providers; and
- a survey taken by over 3,000 respondents.

This input led to the identification and prioritization of the MPGs. The MPGs then drove the creation of Program Concepts, which will drive the establishment of high quality early learning Signature Programs. It is also critical that the Program Concepts and Signature Programs strategically align with the early learning systems reform efforts at both the state and federal levels.

First 5 California's Early Learning Mandate and 2007 Strategic Plan:

The California Children and Families Act requires that First 5 California's strategies be integrated, comprehensive, and collaborative to enhance optimal childhood development and to ensure that children are ready to enter school:

¹ Early learning encompasses the school readiness definition including family functioning, child health, child development and systems of care.

There is hereby created a program in the state for the purposes of promoting, supporting, and improving the early development of children from the prenatal stage to five years of age. These purposes shall be accomplished through the establishment, institution, and coordination of appropriate standards, resources, and integrated and comprehensive programs emphasizing community awareness, education, nurturing, child care, social services, and research. California Health and Safety Code Section 130100)

In 2007, the State Commission adopted its Strategic Plan which includes Strategies 2.1.1 and 2.1.2. These strategies call for convening a program assessment workgroup designed to assess the ongoing viability of programs and to provide recommendations for MPGs. In July 2009, this workgroup convened and recommended a comprehensive set of MPGs for consideration. Through Project Legacy, First 5 California staff shared these recommendations statewide and solicited public input to prioritize the MPGs.

The Time Is Now to Close the Quality Gap:

A vast body of research indicates that early learning programs are one of the best investments a society can make. Even with this evidence, a recent RAND Institute study shows that only 13 percent of California's low income children are in high quality early learning programs.² Over the last year, both the U.S. federal government and the California state government have embarked on comprehensive early learning systems reform. At the heart of both these efforts is a system that 17 other states have already adopted called a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). In fact, several California counties, through First 5 investments, have already established their own QRIS models.

Early Learning is One of the Most Powerful Investments California Can Make

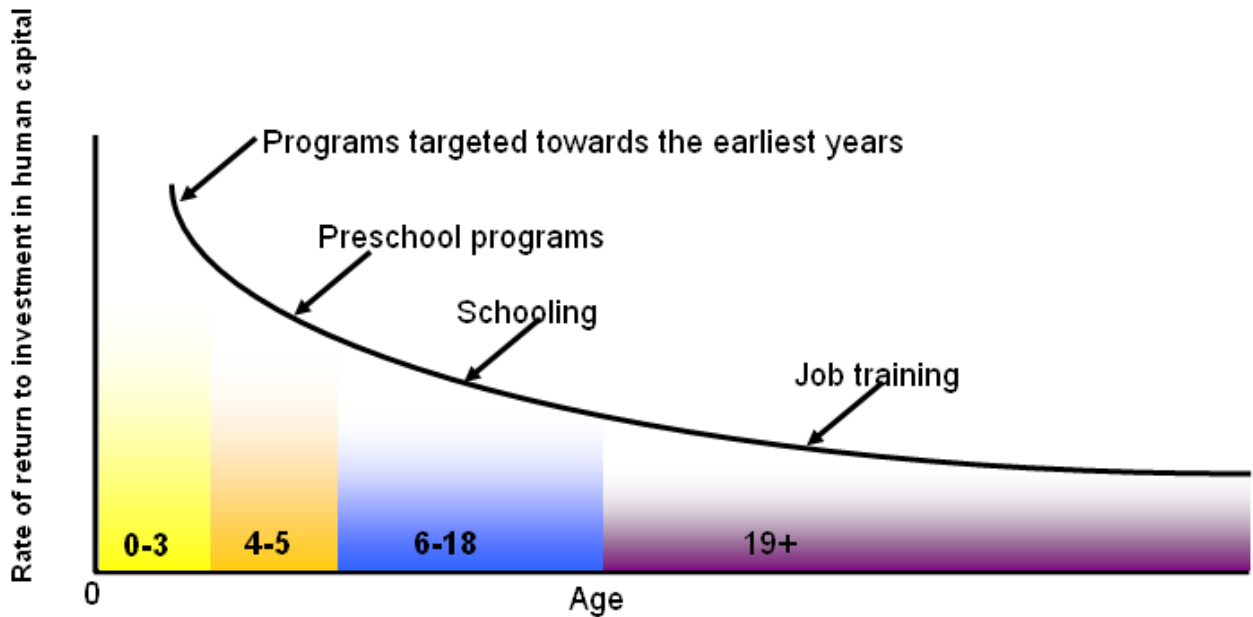
Return on Investment Is 10 Percent Per Annum³

Research shows that effective early learning programs, when combined with access to healthcare and preventive services, can prepare children for success in school. In 2000, University of Chicago economist James Heckman, a Nobel Laureate in Economics, analyzed the effects of early learning investments. He concluded that the younger the child is at the time of the intervention, the greater the payoff to the child's positive development and to the well-being of the larger society (*see Heckman Curve below*). Heckman found that early nurturing, positive learning experiences, and good physical health from ages 0 to 5 greatly impact future success. The returns to society include long-term outcomes such as, higher reading and math achievement, lower rates for

²Karoly, L., Ghosh-Dastidar, B., Zellman, G., Perlman, M. & Fernyhough, L. (2008). Prepared to Learn: The Nature and Quality of Early Care and Education for Preschool-Age Children in California, TR-539-PF/WKKF/PEW/NIEER/WCJVSF/LAUP.
http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR539/.

³ Carolina Abecedarian Project, Chicago Child-Parent Center, Nurse Family Partnership: Elmira Prenatal/Early Infancy Project, and the High/Scope Perry Preschool.

special education, 44 percent lower grade retention rates, higher graduation rates by as much as 29 percent, increased 4-year college enrollment, higher earnings, and less welfare assistance.⁴



New Federal Investments in Early Learning

I'm issuing a challenge to our states: Develop a cutting-edge plan to raise the quality of your early learning programs; show us how you'll work to ensure that children are better prepared for success by the time they enter kindergarten. If you do, we will support you with an Early Learning Challenge Grant that I call on Congress to enact. That's how we will reward quality and incentivize excellence, and make a down payment on the success of the next generation.

--President Obama, March 10, 2009, in remarks to the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

President Obama has committed to increase federal investments in early learning by \$10 billion a year. Thus far, this commitment has resulted in:

- \$5 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) investments in Head Start, Early Head Start, and the Child Care Development and Block Grant;

⁴ Heckman, J., Grunewald, R. & Reynolds, A. (2006). The Dollars and Cents of Investing Early: Cost-Benefit Analysis in Early Care and Education. *Zero to Three*, 10-17.

- the Early Learning Challenge Fund (HR 3221), having passed out of the House of Representatives and being considered in the Senate, would provide states with \$8 billion over eight years to increase the quality of early learning programs, primarily through a QRIS; and,
- early learning being named as a competitive priority for Race to the Top funds.

California Begins Comprehensive Early Learning System Reform

In anticipation of the commitment to early learning at the federal level, California recently began a process to create a high quality early learning system that will get children ready to learn and help close the achievement gap before they start school. Senate Bill 1629, authored by Senator Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, passed by the state legislature and signed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2008, established a committee, the Early Learning Quality Improvement System Advisory Committee (ELQIS), to develop policy recommendations and an implementation plan for an Early Learning Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition to the ELQIS, the Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2008 calls for the governor of all states to create an Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC). ELQIS and ELAC are governing bodies charged with improving the statewide system of early learning and quality. ELQIS is supported by funds from First 5 California and several examples of high-quality programs are supported by First 5 county commissions, most notably in Los Angeles, San Mateo, and San Diego, through the Power of Preschool (PoP) program.

Seventeen states, however, already have a state QRIS in place and are ahead of California in being ready to compete for the new Early Learning Challenge Fund. First 5 California needs to play a critical role in ensuring California becomes competitive and maximizes its share of new federal investments.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

With the Project Legacy process now complete, First 5 California staff recommends that the State Commission approve the MPGs and Program Concepts resulting from the Project Legacy process (Exhibit 1). Staff will use the MPGs and the early learning Program Concepts to develop quality First 5 California Signature Programs with measures to ensure accountability to prepare California's most vulnerable children for success in school.

The strategy is to invest in proven programs that help drive the state's early learning systems change effort, and position California to leverage additional funding, especially the federal Early Learning Challenge Fund. Examples of such programs are: Early Head Start/Head Start expansion, or a statewide QRIS pilot. Furthermore, together these concepts support an integrated and comprehensive

platform that engages families, is consistent with the California Children and Families Act, covers early learning and health, and incorporates the MPGs.

Program Concepts:

The following Program Concepts will allow First 5 California to impact systems change by leveraging federal, state, local and philanthropic funds to create a system that is greater than the sum of its parts. The Program Concepts are organized by the program participants and recipients of the services: the child, the parents, and the teachers. The Program Concepts are key drivers for building a high quality, accountable, state early learning system.

Child

1. Early Learning Program: Develop and implement a national model for a high quality, comprehensive early childhood program to serve California's most vulnerable children. The model will build on the Power of Preschool (PoP) Pilot and the School Readiness Program as well as on existing state child development programs and preschool, and Early Head Start and Head Start. Similar to PoP, this model increases both access and quality.
2. Health Access: Support children's access to health insurance and core health services.

Parent

3. Network for Parenting to Support Parents in Raising Young Children: Develop and implement a Parent Network that supports millions of parents in preparing their children for success in school and life that builds on the First 5 California Parent Web Site, the *Kit for New Parents*, and the Hands-on-Health Van(s).

Teacher

4. Quality Improvement Systems:
 - a. Develop and implement a professional development program that provides incentives for the early learning workforce to further their higher education and also provides stimulus for higher education systems change and builds on the First 5 Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards (CARES) and AB 212 through the California Department of Education, Child Development Division.
 - b. Support the development of an Early Learning Advisory Council and a statewide QRIS pilot that builds on SB 1629 (Steinberg) and is expected to be recommended by the Early Learning Quality Improvement System Advisory Committee.

Fiscal Impact: Fiscal impact will be estimated after the Signature Program concepts are approved.

Advisory Committee Review:

Executive Director Kris Perry and Program Deputy Director, Sarah Neville-Morgan consulted with Commission's Program Committee to obtain feedback on this agenda item. On October 7, 2009, staff met with Commissioner Dartis and on October 12, 2009, staff met with Commissioner Munger. The Commissioners provided suggestions, which have been incorporated into the final versions of these documents.

Alternatives Considered:

Child

Description of Alternative 1

Provide only for expansion, not enhancement, of early learning services based on current models and funding amounts to increase access for children.

Pros

- Reach more children who do not currently receive services

Cons

- Does not increase quality
- Without higher quality, programs won't reach the desired child outcomes nor will utilizing current funding amounts provide enough funds to support infants and toddlers
- Does not support a comprehensive platform for an early learning system

Description of Alternative 2

Provide only for quality enhancement, not expansion, of early learning services.

Pros

- Higher quality
- Programs will have supports needed to reach the desired impacts and will have the funding amounts needed to make providing infant/toddler programs viable.
- Supports a comprehensive platform for an early learning system
- Less costly than increased access

Cons

- Does not expand access to serve additional children and reduce the gaps

Description of Alternative 3

Create an entirely new 0 to 5 Early Learning Program that does not build on the state's existing child development programs.

Pros

- Complete control over program design

Cons

- Not sustainable
- Does not braid or leverage funds
- Does not connect to the federal early learning funding opportunities; a source for additional resources and sustainability

Parent

Description of Alternative 4

Implement several individual programs for parents each targeting a different topic such as tobacco cessation or literacy education.

Pros

- Allows for intensive focus on one content area

Cons

- Too many individual programs and an unfocused effort
- No integration or coordination

Teacher

Description of Alternative 5

Maintain CARES Program as currently structured.

Pros

- Program continuity
- Field familiar with program and requirements

Cons

- Not sustainable and does not position California for potential federal funds
- Does not include higher education systems reform as comprehensively as it could
- Is not accessible state-wide

EXHIBITS

- 1) Matrix of Measurable Program Goals and Program Concepts
- 2) First 5 California Program Concepts within a 3-Tiered Approach