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SARAH JACKSON

NOT GOLDEN YET

BUILDING A STRONGER WORKFORCE FOR
YOUNG CHILDREN IN CALIFORNIA

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About the Author



Sarah Jackson is a California-based journalist covering education, child welfare and urban economic development. As partner at HiredPen Inc. (<http://www.hiredpeninc.com>), Sarah works closely with leading academics, foundations, and think tanks to get research into the hands of policymakers.

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Reforming Early Education, Birth Through Third Grade

State and Local Reports

From 2015 through 2016, the Early Education Initiative will be producing a series of reports from states and localities across the United States to provide an inside look at efforts to support children's learning from infancy and extending into the early grades. Access to the reports is available through Atlas (atlas.newamerica.org), the data and analysis tool designed for New America's Education Policy Program. Reports are forthcoming, or have already been published, in the following geographic areas.

A report that provides analysis and ranks all 50 states and Washington, DC on progress in advancing early education policies will be published in November 2015.

The David Douglas School District in Portland, OR

Focused on supporting dual language learners' linguistic and academic development.



The San Francisco Unified School District

Focused on aligning teaching and learning across grade levels.



California

Focused on improving the workforce.



Massachusetts

Focused on helping children achieve success in literacy.



Minnesota

Focused on helping children achieve success in literacy.

San Antonio, TX

Focused on supporting dual language learners' linguistic and academic development.

**District of Columbia
Public Schools in
Washington, DC**

Focused on supporting dual language learners' linguistic and academic development.

INTRODUCTION

California has always been a crystal ball for other states across America. It is at the forefront of many of the nation's demographic shifts, as one of four states that is officially "majority minority," which demographers predict will happen in the rest of the country by 2040.¹ Of the 1.5 million infants and toddlers in California,² 53 percent are Latino and 48 percent are low-income, according to the 2013 census.³ Nearly half of California's children speak a language other than English.⁴

Yet if trends for children of these demographics continue, many will far fall behind in school. "It's hard to imagine what California is going to be like in 20, 30, or 40 years if only 16 percent of California fourth grade Latinos are reading at proficient levels now, and it goes on year after year," says Antonia Lopez, director of Early Childhood Education at the National Council of La Raza.

Research shows that from birth, interactions with adults provide a crucial foundation for learning as children grow. Yet, the quality of experiences in infant-toddler settings, such as child care centers, and in pre-K and early elementary classrooms, are often mixed at best.⁵ Decades ago the goals of early childhood settings were to provide basic care for young children, to be safe places with a few toys and coloring books. Today, as researchers have come to understand the critical developmental period between ages zero through eight, advocates and others are calling for a richer learning experience in early

childhood centers. As Bridget Hamre and her colleagues at the University of Virginia have written, "our focus has shifted to the hows of quality—how teachers interact with children, how they use time and materials to get the most out of every moment, and how they ensure that children are engaged and stimulated."⁶

Because of this shift in understanding, the role of the adults—particularly the adults who are paid to teach children in child care settings, pre-K* programs, and kindergarten through third grade classrooms—is paramount.

This paper looks at how, and whether, the state of California is preparing its early childhood educators for the demands of a growing, more diverse population. The focus in these pages is on professionals and those who aspire to the profession of early education. (Children are, of course, also cared for by other able adults, including family members, friends, neighbors, or otherwise unlicensed child care providers; they are beyond the purview of this report.) What is California doing to build a workforce that can adequately care for and educate its youngest citizens? What lessons can other states draw from California's experience?

* New America uses the word pre-K to denote a pre-kindergarten setting that employs trained teachers to lead educational experiences in classrooms for children a year or two away from kindergarten. This includes Head Start for three- and four-year-olds, many programs around the country labeled "preschool," and California's Transitional Kindergarten program.

Not Just Pre-K: Looking Across the Birth-Through-Age-8 Spectrum

Improving the early childhood workforce requires attention across the age span of early childhood. New findings in developmental science show that the interactions young children have with adults *from birth* build crucial foundations for learning. This means starting by helping parents recognize the importance of loving interactions and "conversations" with their infants. It also requires a recognition of the need for affordable and high-quality child care that immerses children in nurturing and language-rich learning environments before they enter school and the need to continue that immersion once children arrive in pre-K classrooms and through the K–3 grades. Science shows that by age nine, when children have entered middle childhood, they are able to accomplish complex intellectual tasks, provided they have had opportunities to build a good foundation in those first eight years. For more on policies across this age span, see Laura Bornfreund, Clare McCann, Conor P. Williams, and Lisa Guernsey, *Beyond Subprime Learning: Accelerating Progress in Early Education* (Washington, DC: New America, 2014).

OVERVIEW AND RECENT HISTORY OF EARLY EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA

In 2014, there were 2.5 million children under age four in California.⁷ Approximately 1.8 million children under age six are in need of places to be while their parents are working.⁸ According to Children Now, nearly half of all California's children are growing up in a poor or low-income household, where a family of four earns less than \$45,622 a year. Twenty-two percent of students are dual language learners, with 85 percent of them native Spanish speakers.⁹

Many attempts to support these children have sputtered over the past decade, with significant backsliding during the Great Recession. Data show that between 2008 and 2013, about one-quarter of slots were eliminated across child care and preschool programs and many providers could not afford to keep their doors open.¹⁰ The state did manage to at least somewhat increase preschool access by combining five separate funding streams to create the California State Preschool Program.¹¹ But today, the California Preschool Program still serves only a small percentage of the state's three- and four-year-olds: 9 percent and 18 percent, respectively, in 2014.¹² Public schools have faced significant financial hurdles too, as state spending per California student dropped by almost 22 percent from 2008 to 2012. While state K–12 funding has improved under Governor Jerry Brown, it still has not been restored to pre-recession levels.¹³

Starting to Recover, With Much Work Still to Do

The state has made some advances in other areas, however. Scott Moore, former policy director at Early Edge and now a political consultant for early childhood issues in the state, calls the recent movement in early childhood education policy in California a tale of contrasts with “pretty dramatic increases in some areas and pretty dramatic decreases in other areas.”

Most notably, in 2011, California enacted Senate Bill 1381, The Kindergarten Readiness Act. The law established a new grade level in public schools across the state—Transitional Kindergarten (TK) for four-year-olds with fall birthdays. By changing the birthday cutoff from December to September for entering kindergarteners, the

law addressed a long-held concern that children were entering kindergarten as four-year-olds unprepared to handle the increasingly academic curriculum. The state had always had one of the youngest kindergarten entry dates in the nation. At the same time, California also had one of the most academically rigorous kindergarten curricula in the country, similar to today's Common Core.

California also won \$75 million in two federal Race to the Top—“Early Learning Challenge” awards, one in 2011 and one in 2013, which have been awarded to only 20 states through a competitive application process. Policy makers have been using these funds to improve the quality of publicly and privately funded preschool and child care programs.

In 2013, the state's department of education approved a Comprehensive Early Learning Plan, and in the past few years, the budget situation has become less strained. The budget passed in 2014 included the biggest investment in more than a decade, expanding investments in professional and workforce development and making progress toward restoring the rates at which subsidized child care centers are reimbursed from the state.¹⁴ Those rates had been stagnant for many years and were cut by about a billion dollars overall during the recession.¹⁵ The 2015 budget also built on these investments.

Amid these new initiatives for children under age five, major changes are afoot in the public schools that serve children at kindergarten age and above: California is undergoing the most comprehensive education finance reform in four decades. In July of 2013 Governor Brown helped push through the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which consolidates dollars that had been scattered into multiple categorical funding streams, giving much greater flexibility to individual districts in how they spend their money. LCFF also provides supplemental funding to districts serving high needs students—those who are low-income, dual language learners, or in foster care.¹⁶ The change requires districts to draft Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) that aim to hold them accountable for meeting LCFF's eight priority areas of student and school improvement. The LCFF also gives parents what could be a strong voice in determining how local districts allocate funds.

This new local-control structure does not sit well with all advocates and early education experts, including analysts at New America, who caution that local decisions are not always better decisions, that local control can widen disparities between districts and create inefficiencies across the state, and that funds should be spent carefully

on evidence-based interventions.¹⁷ But it does allow districts to allocate additional dollars to support early learning for children from birth through five if they wish. Some advocates are pushing for parents and local community members to encourage districts to expand access to early learning programs.

Table 1

California's Programs for Child Care and Education

Program	Description	Estimated Slots in 2015	Budget Act 2014-2015
CalWORKs Childcare [All Stages]	Provides child care services for parents receiving welfare while they are looking for work, training, or working.	125,000	\$904 million
General Child Care and Development	Program for low-income working families not affiliated with CalWORKS.	51,000	\$544 million
Alternative Payment Program	Provides subsidized child care vouchers for children up to age 12 while their parents are working, looking for work, or training for a job.	27,000	\$182 million
Migrant / Severely Handicapped	Programs targeted for specific populations of children	3,000	\$29 million ¹⁸
State Preschool	Part-day, part-year preschool program for low-income families.	149,000	\$664 million
Transitional Kindergarten	First year of a two-year kindergarten experience for students who turn five between September 2 and December 2.	125,000 eligible	No additional funding. (See page 12.)
Public Schools	Typically known as K-12; sometimes including Pre-K classrooms funded by school districts or federal special education dollars.	6,236,672	N/A

Sources: Legislative Analyst's Office, *Overview of California's Child Care and Development System*, March 4, 2015; Diana Mercado-Garcia, Heather E. Quick, Aleksandra Holod, and Karen Manship. *Transitional Kindergarten in California: Initial Findings from the First Year of Implementation* (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, June 2013); and California Department of Education, "Fingertip Facts on Education in California."

EARLY INTERACTIONS MATTER: FOCUSING ON THE ADULTS WHO CARE FOR CALIFORNIA'S YOUNG CHILDREN

Every week in the United States, nearly 11 million children under age five are in some type of program in which they receive care and early learning from adults other than their parents.¹⁹ The more we learn from developmental science, the more we understand the importance of providing more than just a healthy and safe environment in these settings. Our understanding of quality care has shifted from being defined by class size and whether kids have adequate books and toys, to a more sophisticated appreciation of the role of the adult in the room. The way that an adult works with young children is crucial to how fully children are able to reach their potential as learners and future citizens.

Our understanding of quality care has shifted from being defined by class size and whether kids have adequate books and toys, to a more sophisticated appreciation of the role of the adult in the room.

High-profile studies like Perry Preschool in Ypsilanti, Michigan, the Child-Parent Centers in Chicago, and the Abecedarian program in North Carolina are renowned for showing that low-income children can do exceedingly well in quality programs. What is often not called out, however, is that quality in these programs is derived in part from lead teachers with decent pay who had attained high levels of preparation and skill. This research shows that children in settings with these teachers end up needing fewer special education services, perform better

in school, and engage in less crime, all of which led to reduced costs to society.²⁰

“Kids of this age are just firing on all cylinders trying to learn,” said Meera Mani, who heads up the Packard Foundation’s Children, Families and Communities Program in California. “And really how they learn is through their interactions with the environment and with the adults in their lives.” The foundation has just launched a ten-year initiative focused on improving the quality of the interactions between young children and their adult caregivers in the state, interactions which Mani calls “brain-building moments.”

What does it take to support teachers and care providers to help them improve the nature and quality of their interactions with the young children in their care?

What conditions do they work in? And how do we make sure systems and structures are in place to support development of the skills and competencies adult caregivers need to be able to really support children’s growth and learning?

A report released in April of 2015 takes on some of these questions. *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation* is the result of work by a 19-person committee at the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the National Research Council charged with exploring the science of child development and its implications for those who are paid to work with children from birth through age eight. The report found that expectations for early childhood professionals have “not kept pace” with what we now know young children need.²¹

The report points to the challenges of strengthening the workforce because of the great diversity in professional roles, systems, and services in the field and the fact that they are often decentralized. This is certainly the case in California, where 58 different county governments and more than 100 higher education institutions are responsible for much of the state’s early learning training and professional development. Multiple and sometimes

overlapping programs serve young children in a variety of early childhood settings and Governor Brown has placed increased emphasis on turning even more control over to local actors.

A challenge: In California, 58 different county governments and more than 100 higher education institutions are responsible for much of the state's early learning training and professional development.

The IOM report's blueprint for action (see page 9) calls for much more coordination and alignment between the competencies that science shows are needed and what is actually taught in higher education systems. The blueprint also calls for developing pathways that eventually transition into requirements for lead teachers to attain a bachelor's degree, and it recommends consistent quality and coherence in ongoing professional learning and practice for all members of the early education workforce.²²

Among its recommendations, the IOM report suggests that each state establish data systems for gathering

information on the workforce across professional roles and settings that serve children birth-through-8. As of 2010, at least 32 states and localities across the country had already taken steps to do so. These registries are in various stages of implementation, but all attempt to capture workforce data and professional growth and development over time.²³

Similarly, national professional organizations and states are also laying out stated expectations or "competencies" for education professionals who work with children birth-through-8. At the national level, for example, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has developed "Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation." IOM's scan across state and national statements of core competencies for educators suggests that while there is generally broad agreement on what educators who work with children from birth through age eight need to know and be able to do, there are also areas of variation and gaps. Some holes, for example, are in the areas of family engagement, assessment, and making sure statements reflect the most up-to-date research on how children learn.

The report also spotlighted the depth of knowledge educators need to work with dual language learners.²⁴ Specifically, educators should develop an understanding of language development and use instructional approaches "organized around language and knowledge building."²⁵ These approaches include providing opportunities for students to engage in extended conversations with their peers and, to the extent possible, integrating the child's home language into classroom activities and routines.

Recommendations from the Institute of Medicine's *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8 Report*

1. Strengthen competency-based qualification requirements for all care and education professionals working with children from birth through age eight.
2. Develop and implement comprehensive pathways and multi-year timelines at the individual, institutional, and policy levels for transitioning to a minimum bachelor's degree qualification requirement, with specialized knowledge and competencies, for all lead educators working with children from birth through age eight.
3. Strengthen practice-based qualification requirements, including a supervised induction period, for all lead educators working with children from birth through age eight.
4. Build an interdisciplinary foundation in higher education for child development.
5. Develop and enhance programs in higher education for care and education professionals.
6. Support the consistent quality and coherence of professional learning supports during ongoing practice for professionals working with children from birth through age eight.
7. Develop a new paradigm for evaluation and assessment of professional practice for those who work with children from birth through age eight.
8. Ensure that policies and standards that shape the professional learning of care and education leaders (elementary school principals and directors in early care and education settings) encompass the foundational knowledge and competencies needed to support high-quality practices for child development and early learning in their organizations.
9. Improve consistency and continuity for children from birth through age eight by strengthening collaboration and communication among professionals and systems within the care and education sector and with closely related sectors, especially health and social services.
10. Support workforce development with coherent funding, oversight, and policies.
11. Collaboratively develop and periodically update coherent guidance that is foundational across roles and settings for care and education professionals working with children from birth through age eight.
12. Support comprehensive state- and local-level efforts to transform the professional workforce for children from birth through age eight.
13. Build a better knowledge base to inform workforce development and professional learning services and systems.

Source: LaRue Allen and Briget B. Kelly, eds., *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2015).

HOW CALIFORNIA'S CURRENT POLICIES AFFECT THE WORKFORCE

California has a long way to go toward acting on the recommendations of the IOM report and fulfilling the promise of professionalizing its early childhood workforce. A forthcoming paper from New America compares California to other states in workforce policy and in six other areas. Preliminary data show the Golden State lagging far behind.²⁶ For this paper, interviews with experts paint a picture of a state taking promising steps forward yet still held back by significant obstacles. Here are three.

Obstacle 1: An Unclear Picture of Training

Early childhood teachers in California working outside the K–12 system are able to begin working in a classroom with very limited training.²⁷ But the data on their actual levels of educational attainment are still foggy. There has not been a comprehensive early childhood workforce study in the state since 2006. The state collects some information on levels of educational attainment for members of the workforce who participate in training sponsored through the state's Early Education and Support Division. And the CA Early Care and Education Workforce Registry is beginning to collect this information for a limited number of practitioners (see page 14), but these data are not

Low wages are frequently cited by experts and advocates as barriers to attracting and retaining highly qualified educators who want to stay and build their careers in early childhood education.

representative.²⁸ In fact, participation in the workforce registry is not mandatory, which hinders its ability to capture anything close to a full picture of the state's early education workforce.

“The lack of data for monitoring and evaluation limits the options for evidence-based decision-making regarding how best to advance the professional development of the ECE workforce,” wrote RAND researcher Lynn Karoly in a 2012 report.²⁹

The data from the 2006 study, conducted by the Center for the Study of Childcare Employment, reflect the low standards set by state law. Some home-based providers and center staff had attained college degrees at that time, and others held high school diplomas and/or had completed a few college credits. The authors point out that for much of the early childhood workforce, “current levels of education and training well exceed what the law requires.”³⁰

Obstacle 2: The Compensation Problem

The workforce responsible for the years prior to kindergarten in California is drastically underpaid. California's birth-to-5 workers earn, on average, \$24,000 annually, an income that makes a one-person household eligible for food stamps, Medicaid, and other social welfare programs.³¹ According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, child care workers have experienced no increase in real wages since 1997. Wages of pre-K teachers have done slightly better, increasing by 15 percent in that time.³²

These low wages are frequently cited by experts and advocates as barriers to attracting and retaining highly qualified educators who want to stay and build their careers in early childhood education. Scott Moore says that these disparities in pay also affect the field's ability to attract high-quality teachers, who will defect to the K–12 system where they can earn much higher salaries and have clearer pathways for career advancement. In California the average annual wage in 2010 for child care workers was \$23,730; for preschool teachers it was

\$30,500. By comparison, the average annual wage for kindergarten teachers that same year was \$56,660.³³ The field's low wages and poor working conditions are a significant barrier to attaining more training or participating in professional development programs. Teachers rarely have time for training on the job nor can they afford to take time off to attend school or training sessions that would enable them to advance in their field.

"There's a dynamic tension in our field right now between the expectation for quality and dealing with a workforce that is grossly underpaid," said Andrea Youngdahl, former director of the city of Oakland's Department of Human Services. "We can't have that conversation about quality without looking at compensation."

It is illogical to pay the least to the teachers of children whose age of development is the most critical.

In their report *Worthy Work, STILL Unlivable Wages*, Marcy Whitebook, Deborah Phillips, and Carollee Howes call for a "comprehensive reassessment of the nation's early care and education policies."³⁴ They find that many in the early childhood workforce worry about being able to feed their families and rely heavily on public supports despite the fact that they may have attained postsecondary degrees and certificates. They argue that federal and state governments should prioritize "livable, equitable, and dependable wages for early care and education teachers."³⁵ Whitebook said in an interview, "we have not made these jobs attractive to people." She hopes to one day see early childhood education becoming a career pathway to the middle class in the way that health care jobs have.

Given what we know about the importance of early brain development, Moore notes that it is illogical to pay the least to the teachers of children whose age of development is the most critical. "In terms of how we've structured our system and how we support children's learning," Moore says, "we've done it backwards."

Obstacle 3: The Birth-to-5 and K-12 Workforce Divide

In her 2014 paper *Building a Skilled Teacher Workforce: Shared and Divergent Challenges in Early Care and Education and in Grades K-12*, Whitebook describes the development of two separate systems for educating and caring for children of different ages in the United States: the public school system (traditionally for children from age five and up, with a dedicated funding stream, and offered to all children without an income means test or a waiting list for services), and the early care and education system (traditionally for children from birth-through-5, no guaranteed public funding, and often with waiting lists for services even when children meet the eligibility criteria).³⁶

In addition to differences in compensation structures and required preparation, teachers in public schools receive more professional development opportunities and better working conditions, job protections, and career pathways. They are typically salaried employees whose working conditions are shaped by collective bargaining agreements, while early childhood teachers' pay is often hourly and varies dramatically, and they are much less likely to be unionized.

K-12 teacher preparation generally includes field work and student teaching, while many of those in the early care and education system do not have pre-service education nor an expected course for continuing education.

These differences have led to higher teacher turnover rates in early childhood education, as compared to K-12—turnover rates are generally 30 percent a year for teachers in birth-to-5 settings, while only 15 percent of teachers leave their jobs each year in K-12—and to problems with retention. Teacher turnover has documented emotional and educational consequences for young children whose relationships with stable caregivers are foundational for learning.³⁷

As IOM report authors write: "holding lower educational expectations for early childhood educators than for those working in early elementary grades perpetuates the perception that educating children before kindergarten requires less experience than educating older students, which helps justify policies—such as for compensation, program funding, and professional supports—that make it difficult to maximize the potential of young children and early learning programs that serve them."³⁸

Transitional Kindergarten: The Good and the Bad

California's new Transitional Kindergarten (TK) offers some opportunities for beginning to bridge this workforce divide in California. The law established a new grade level in public schools across the state—a grade prior to kindergarten for four year olds with fall birthdays (see box below). In 2013–2014 the program served 57,000 students and up to as many as 125,000 were eligible to enroll in the 2014–2015 school year, though actual enrollment numbers for this year have yet to be released.

TK was created at no immediate, additional cost to the state.³⁹ How is this possible? Some students (those with fall birthdays) who would have been eligible for kindergarten in the past now enter TK instead. Schools are still serving the same number of students, though now they are divided between kindergarten and TK. New costs will come in 13 years, when these students reach their senior year of high school, and the state will have to begin to pay for the extra year of school TK students received.

Expanding the K–12 system to include four-year-olds has several important benefits, most notably that teachers of these children will have access to salaries and workforce supports traditionally only available to teachers of older students. These teachers will be paid on par with kindergarten teachers.

Bringing educators of four-year-olds into the K–12 system will also allow educators of this age group to collaborate more closely with their peers who are teaching students in the early elementary grades. Importantly, it also opens up opportunities for more advancement and formalized continuing education.

The 2014–2015 state budget act mandates increased specialized training for TK teachers. In addition to an elementary teaching credential, any teacher assigned to a TK classroom on or after July 1, 2015 is required to have at least 24 units in early childhood education or childhood development or both by August of 2020 (though, as advocates point out, the law did not specify the level of this required coursework, or the content, something lawmakers will need to clarify in order to make sure early childhood expertise is in fact brought into the state's public school classrooms). Another way to fulfill the requirement is to gain comparable professional experience in a classroom setting with preschool-age children, as determined by the local educational agency employing the teacher, or earn the teacher level of the state's child development permit, which is issued to early educators outside of K–12 schools. (See box on page 16).

To support teachers meeting these new educational requirements, the 2014–15 Budget Education Act allotted \$15 million for teacher stipends for training. While priority for funding was given to TK teachers, California State Preschool teachers are also eligible to make use

Explaining Birthday Cutoffs in Transitional Kindergarten

In most states parents can enroll their children in kindergarten if they turn five by September 30. Prior to the passage of the Kindergarten Readiness Act in 2010, children in California were allowed to enroll in kindergarten as long as they turned five years old by December of their kindergarten year. This gave California one of the youngest kindergarten entry dates in the nation. Kindergarten classrooms in the state were filled with a mix of both four- and five-year-olds.

There was a long-held concern that children entering kindergarten as four-year-olds in California were too young to handle the increasingly academic curriculum.

With the adoption of the Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010, California children now have to turn five years old by September 1 in order to enroll in kindergarten. Children who turn five between September 2 and December 2—those who would have been eligible for kindergarten but are no longer eligible under the new law—can now attend Transitional Kindergarten. TK, as it is known, is a new grade level in public schools across the state, the first year of a two-year kindergarten experience for children with fall birthdays.

of these stipends. Local councils are charged with dispersing these funds.

Bringing educators of four-year-olds into the K–12 system will also allow educators of this age group to collaborate more closely with their peers who are teaching students in the early elementary grades.

These funds have resulted in some important new local partnerships. Community colleges and universities are coming together to redesign early childhood education coursework. For example, Ventura County started the Transitional Kindergarten Learning Institute. The institute includes a certificate program that guides teachers in cohorts through four courses that fulfill the new requirements. The courses were designed in partnership with CSU Channel Islands Early Childhood Studies program and Ventura Community College. The first course, Getting Started, covers how young children learn, planning, curriculum, observation, assessment, and social-emotional learning. Subsequent courses include early literacy and language and science and mathematics instruction. They also include information about working with DLLs and special needs students and how to engage with families. On-site coaching and support to TK teachers and administrators is also being provided by the Ventura County Office of Education.⁴⁰

Similarly, Orange County put together a TK Network, whose advisory board included representatives from local planning councils, CSU Fullerton, Brandman University, and local early learning teachers and district TK coordinators. It conducted a county-wide survey showing that many current TK teachers in the county were not aware of the state’s early learning guidelines, known as the Preschool Learning Foundations. The survey also identified the need for additional instructional support in areas such as social-emotional development, using data to drive developmentally appropriate instruction,

and early mathematics. This information helped the Orange County Department of Education create a new TK Institute and a plan to direct TK teachers and preschool teachers toward appropriate coursework.⁴¹

This work is helping to create more seamlessness and integration. However, TK added complexity to the state’s already complex system. Transitional kindergarten resolved one inequity by removing the really young children from a kindergarten program that was too rigorous for their developmental level and ensuring they received a different program in exchange. But, as Moore points out, the new grade level created several new inequities that the state will have to rectify down the line. By giving an extra year of schooling to the children with fall birthdays, one quarter of all children have access to 14 years of public school and the rest receive 13. Furthermore, the state now has two separate and unequal programs for four-year-olds—one inside the public school system and one outside. TK four-year-olds have access to credentialed teachers and much higher per-pupil expenditures than the four-year-olds in the state preschool program. In 2014, for example, the state spent just \$4,298 per child for state preschool, significantly less than the \$9,067 per pupil spent on students in the TK–12 system.⁴²

“The program for low-income kids gets less than half the funding per child, lower teacher qualification and lower paid teachers than the program for everybody [who has a fall birthday],” Moore said.

Stipends for teacher training have resulted in some important new local partnerships.

Building Infrastructure to Support Birth-to-5 Workforce Training and Development

With the repercussions of the recession still evident, TK still in fledgling form, and those three big obstacles in the way, California has experienced many challenges over the past several years. Many of those challenges are likely to remain until state policymakers grapple with the

financing necessary to alleviate compensation problems. But there are signs of hope. Last year the Packard Foundation brought together a diverse group of leaders to more closely align policy goals and develop a shared agenda for systems change. The group of representatives from philanthropy, First 5 administrators, and advocates is working to develop a shared vision and road map for California’s children from birth-to-8. “California,” Packard’s Meera Mani said, “is very ready for this.”⁴³ Furthermore, state leaders have taken promising steps toward building some of the infrastructure required to improve teacher training and take into account new knowledge about the importance of adult-child interactions. Seven of these initiatives are explained in the box below.

Signs of Progress in Building California’s Early Childhood Workforce Infrastructure

Over the past several years, California leaders have embarked upon at least seven initiatives to strengthen the workforce:

1. California Early Childhood Educator Competencies
2. The California Workforce Registry
3. The California Community Colleges Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP), the Faculty Initiative Project (FIP), and new Early Childhood Transfer Degree
4. Reviews underway by CA Commission on Teacher Credentialing
5. Providing professional development with an emphasis on coaching
6. First 5 California’s support for training and professional development
7. California’s Preschool Instructional Network

The state’s **Early Childhood Educator Competencies**, published in 2011, mark an important milestone. They define the knowledge and skills early educators need to support learning among children under age five. For example, the “Relationships, Interactions, and Guidance” competency area includes knowledge about the role of social–emotional development in learning and school readiness and an understanding of the social–emotional factors that impact children’s behavior. A key concept in the “Dual Language Development” area is that dual-language learners are developing a foundation in their home language and English at the same time.⁴⁴ The IOM report cites California’s core competencies as some of the most comprehensive in the nation with respect to dual language learners.⁴⁵

The opening of the **California ECE Workforce Registry** is also a sign of the state attempting to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the early learning workforce. The registry tracks salary and wage data, employment status and information, turnover, education, and professional development. It is currently operating only in San Francisco and Los Angeles⁴⁶ with about 8,000 users. For program administrators, the registry is a way of documenting the qualifications of their staff. Yet participation is not mandatory, which as mentioned above bedevils efforts to track the early childhood workforce in the state.

“The absence of data allows the status quo to persist,” said Whitebook, of the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at the University of California Berkeley. Whitebook compared the importance of collecting data on the early childhood workforce to health care data. Once people were able to track the number of uninsured people in the country, the issue gained more traction. Ideally, with larger data, and more transparency, the same policy opportunities would arise for ECE compensation and workforce issues.

Reforming Higher Education and the Credentialing System

Meanwhile, there is a growing desire for reform in higher education. The largest number of California students taking courses in child development or working toward a degree are doing so at one of the state’s 103 community colleges.⁴⁷ California community colleges award two formal degrees in early education, an associate in arts and an associate in science; five different certificates; and two other awards in the field of child development and early childhood education.⁴⁸ In the most recent tally five years ago,

community colleges gave out 6,549 associate degrees or other credentials in child development or early childhood development. However, according to a RAND report, none of the community college programs are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the only available benchmark of quality. The report also found that courses often lack diverse faculty, and that faculty are primarily part-time adjuncts given little opportunity to gain knowledge of recent developments in the field, and who lack recent, or any, experience.⁴⁹

Experts also find that higher education institutions in the state need to be more proactive in meeting the diverse needs of their child development students, many of whom are low-income, English language learners, and working parents themselves.⁵⁰ Community colleges and universities need to help these students get the support they need to advance their careers. This should include more opportunities for scholarships, tutoring, conveniently scheduled classes, and support for students learning English as a second language.⁵¹

Though community colleges provide the bulk of early childhood education courses, a report by California Competes finds that its structure can be an impediment to student success. “Even though the community college system is essentially funded at the state level,” the report notes, “the local college districts operate as 72 separate entities with the ability to spend taxpayer dollars but little accountability for results.”⁵²

However, the **California Community Colleges Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP)** has been working to better streamline early childhood education training by creating a 24-unit (eight course), lower-division program of study for early childhood education. The eight classes are designed to be foundational, evidence-based courses for all early childhood professionals. As of February 2015, 101 community colleges (all but two) have agreed to participate in CAP and align their ECE coursework.⁵³ Race to the Top funding provided additional support for this initiative in 2012. Meanwhile, the **Faculty Initiative Project (FIP)** has been working to integrate essential California Department of Education materials and competencies with core early childhood education curriculum in the community college and the state university systems. The project aims to provide faculty with access to CDE resources to improve their pedagogy, including the California Preschool Learning Foundations.⁵⁴

Additionally, a new **Early Childhood Transfer Degree** for California State Universities will make it possible for students who complete their associate degrees in early

California State Universities that Now Accept an Early Childhood Transfer Degree:

- Humboldt State University
- Fresno State University
- California State University, Fullerton
- Sacramento State
- California State University, Dominguez Hills
- California Polytechnic State University
- California State University, Chico

Source: The Child Development Training Consortium, www.childdevelopment.org.

childhood education to get priority admission to schools in the state university system and enter with junior status. Seven CSU’s now accept this transfer degree, a step that gets California closer to developing a career ladder for advancing early childhood professionals.⁵⁵

Reviews by California’s Commission on Teacher Credentialing

In her report, *Getting in Sync*, Laura Bornfreund documents how teachers in pre-K through third grade need a different set of skills than those required of their later-grade elementary school counterparts. Good teaching is lost when teachers arrive in early childhood classrooms without a deep understanding of early childhood. The report points to the specialized knowledge that these teachers need to focus on social-emotional growth, family engagement, and instruction in early science, literacy, and mathematics.

Credentialing structures in many states are part of the problem because they “spur prospective teachers to

obtain broad degrees and forgo specialized training.”⁵⁶ This is the case in California, which does not have a specific credential for early childhood teachers and instead offers a single, P–12 credential (preschool through 12th grade, for self-contained classrooms). It is the only state to have such a broad credential, though the self-contained classroom specification makes it essentially function as a P–6 credential.⁵⁷ California did at one time have a preschool-through-grade-3 credential, which was phased out in the 1970s to give principals more hiring flexibility and teachers access to a larger diversity of jobs.

It is likely that the state will update its credentialing in coming years. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) is now reviewing credentials given out to teachers both inside and outside of the public school system. One task is to review and update the requirements for child development permits. There are six levels of these permits, which are currently the only form of state certification required in California for those

working in state-funded child development programs outside the public schools (see box below). A CTC advisory panel is charged with reviewing these permit levels by July 2016 and developing recommendations to ensure that teachers and administrators are well prepared.⁵⁸

The CTC is also rethinking teacher preparation programs and reviewing the program standards for the P–12 credentials inside the public schools. It will be considering a full range of issues, including whether or not to introduce new levels (e.g., PreK–Grade 3; birth-to-eight) and whether to expand the existing teacher preparation programs standards to include TK and preschool. Unfortunately, this review is happening on a different track from the child development permit, causing leaders to miss an opportunity to bring more awareness of early child development into public schools. It is another example of the artificial divide between K–12 and birth-through-age-5 educators.

Credentials Issued by The State of California to Adults Who Work with Children Ages 0 to 8*

Outside the K–12 System

Child Development Permit

Who uses it: Adults who care for children birth to age five, in state-funded child development programs, such as the California Preschool Program.

How to obtain it: There are six levels. The lowest level (assistant) requires six units of early childhood education or child development coursework. The highest level, the program director permit, requires a bachelor’s degree plus additional units of related coursework and field experience.

Note: Per legislation in 2014, TK teachers also need either a child development teacher permit or equivalent specialized coursework or training in child development.

*This is not an exhaustive list.

Source: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

Inside the K–12 System

P–12 Multiple Subject Teaching Credential

Who uses it: Typically elementary and middle school teachers teaching in self-contained classrooms. This now includes transitional kindergarten teachers.

How to obtain it: Teachers need a bachelor’s degree as well as student-teaching experience.

The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at the University of California Berkeley has urged the CTC to explore the creation of an early education credential to ensure that adults with knowledge of early childhood are teaching in the state's TK classrooms. In a public comment submitted to the CTC, Lea Austin, a specialist at the center, recommends that the commission adjust program standards to prepare teachers to align classroom curricula to Preschool Learning Foundations, as state law now requires.

Providing Coaching and Mentoring in Teacher Prep and On the Job

Coaching is often considered the most effective approach for imparting the kinds of skills and understanding of early learning that teachers and caregivers need, and it is one of the most common forms of professional development in California.⁵⁹ For example, the long-running California Early Childhood Mentor program pairs experienced classroom teachers with students from early childhood education programs in over 100 community colleges. Mentors (sometimes referred to as coaches) receive stipends for their participation. In 2013–2014, the program paid over \$1 million in stipends to over 600 mentors, who in turn mentored 1,794 student teachers from community colleges.⁶⁰

Coaching typically happens onsite, in small groups, and the focus is often aligned with local QRIS efforts. Coaches may model particular instructional practices or interactions with parents or they may analyze video recordings of practitioners at work. Though effective, it is still unclear how many hours of coaching are optimal and how closely aligned the content should be to quality assessments. New research is also needed on how to best coach bilingual teachers and those who teach dual-language learners.

A study by RAND and AIR found coaching and mentoring in some form in every one of the 14 counties they reviewed. Several groups in each county may provide coaching, ranging from the agency administering the quality improvement system (often the county office of education or the local First 5 agency); community colleges; county staff retention programs; and outside contractors. For example, San Francisco County has 23 coaches provided by Preschool for All (PFA), the citywide preschool program, as well as coaches provided by San Francisco Quality Connections, the school district, and a Coaching Collaborative supported by First 5.⁶¹

Unfortunately, review of the P-12 credential is happening on a different track from the child development permit.

First 5 California's Push for Education and Professional Development

First 5 California, the statewide and county system for coordinating early learning funded by tobacco taxes, has been instrumental in providing growing access to education and professional development for early education teachers and care providers in the state.⁶² It provides stipends to an average of 7,700 early childhood educators per year⁶³ so they can participate in education and training, advising and academic support, and technical assistance programs. Educators receive stipends based on the amount of coursework and professional development hours they complete. For example, educators who complete 20 hours of online training receive a \$500 stipend.⁶⁴ Educators who complete six units of coursework over the course of a year at a higher education institution receive between \$1,200 to \$1,500. Since 2000 First 5 California has invested \$80 million dollars in this program.⁶⁵

First 5 is also involved in efforts to improve California's QRIS. First 5 was instrumental in helping California win a federal Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant in 2011. The state created a structure of 17 Regional Leadership Consortia to align their local QRIS to a common framework and elements. All of the systems include at least some focus on strengthening teacher-child interactions, most often through the use of an instrument called the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). This tool, which is based on classroom observations of teachers, has been adopted in early childhood programs around the country. How many points a program can earn depends on the depth of its use of the tool—ranging from having familiarity and an overview training on CLASS all the way up to independent assessments.⁶⁶

First 5 is now working with state officials and local counties to emphasize the "I" for improvement in QRIS,

not just the “R” for rating, according to Camille Maben, executive director of California’s First 5 Commission. In April 2015, First 5 approved \$190 million for its latest initiative, IMPACT, which aims to tie funding streams together, build on work that counties are already engaged in, and create new ways to incentivize training and focus on improving adult practice.⁶⁷ Counties have the option to use funds toward training or other supportive services for family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.⁶⁸

The California Preschool Instructional Network (CPIN) also provides professional development and technical assistance to preschool administrators and teachers. CPIN is a program of the California Department of Education in collaboration with the Center for Child and Family Studies at WestEd and the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA). It is delivered through 11 regions in the state. Each region disseminates resources and training. In 2014–2015, it received \$3,386,029 in funding.⁶⁹ In 2013–2014, 11,083 teachers participated in professional development provided by CPIN. Resources include those designed to help early childhood educators understand and better support dual language learners.⁷⁰

An Uphill Climb: Supporting Dual Language Learners

In 1998, California passed Proposition 227, which required that all children in California public schools be taught English by being taught in English. Ever since, debates have raged on its merits and effectiveness. Critics say the law was based more on ideology about assimilation than it was on science.⁷¹

Four of every 10 kindergartners in California are dual language learners. One lesson California may have to offer the rest of the country is that English-only instruction has not led to better educational outcomes for these students. The most comprehensive study (to date) on the impact of Proposition 227 on DLLs concluded that the performance gap between these students and native-English speakers had “remained virtually constant in most subject areas for most grades” and that these findings held even when former DLLs were included in the calculations.⁷² Research on language acquisition has shown that an English-only approach is not always the best one if a student has not already built up enough knowledge of their first, or home, language.⁷³

Challenges in Ensuring Quality Teacher-child Interactions in Linguistically Diverse Classrooms

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) was widely adopted as a tool for professional development in California and across the country. The Office of Head Start uses the CLASS, which is based on observations of teachers working with children, to hold programs accountable for quality and to spur improvement among teachers. California promotes the use of CLASS as a means of helping programs increase their QRIS ratings and improve teacher-child interactions. Research in 2012 by Jason Downer and colleagues as well a follow-up study by Teachstone (the company that developed and sells CLASS) finds that the CLASS works the same way in dual language classrooms as in monolingual English classrooms.^{76,77}

But over the years, several local advocates and researchers have argued that the CLASS may not be suitable as the only tool for evaluating teachers in linguistically diverse classrooms. The protocol has linguistic and cultural limitations, says Antonia Lopez, of the National Council of La Raza. Research notes that CLASS does not measure cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, or include any indicators that assess “teaching strategies specific to dual language learners.”⁷⁸ For example, a tension exists between using repetition to introduce a child to a new language versus conversational methods, such as elaboration and vocabulary-building, that are considered good practice in the CLASS. And most experts agree that teacher-child interactions should include measures of cultural competence and sensitivity. Research has documented the role culture plays in shaping a child’s approach to learning and uses of language and literacy. As Linda Espinosa, lead consultant for the Best Practices for Young Dual Language Learners Project for California’s Department of Education writes in a paper: “school personnel need to be aware of the values and practices of the child’s home environment to design classroom practices that support the child’s successful transition.”⁷⁹

Plus, according to a report by the Governor’s State Advisory Council on Early Learning and Care, research “has shown that instructional use of the home language—often referred to as bilingual education—does not hinder or stunt academic progress in English. On the contrary, there is evidence that teaching children to read in their home language can support their literacy development in English. In other words, when we systematically provide learning experiences in children’s home languages along with learning experiences in English, we promote home-language development without hampering English development.”⁷⁴

This research has implications not only for public schools but also for birth-to-five educators. Experts like Marlene Zepeda, professor emeritus in the Department of Child and Family Studies at California State University, Los Angeles, are leading the charge to help better prepare these educators to work with dual language learners.

In 2011, Zepeda helped develop the Dual Language Learner Teacher Competencies for preschool teachers. Zepeda was also part of a team of experts who helped author California’s Best Practices for Dual Language Learners, a series of papers that synthesized existing research.

Researchers from UCLA’s Civil Rights Project suggest research-based recommendations for using local control funds to support dual language learners.⁷⁵ They suggest basic services like providing full-day kindergarten and preschool, attracting fully credentialed bilingual teachers, professional development around implementing the Common Core for dual language learners and how to align these with ELD standards, and parental involvement, among other areas. Whether these kinds of reforms will actually take place remains to be seen.

CONCLUSION: GO FOR BOLDER REFORMS

California has begun the process of rebuilding some of what was lost during the recession and is putting systems in place that would enable a more golden future for the state’s children. It is encouraging to see leaders focus on strengthening the early childhood workforce. But there are big financing and structural issues getting in the

way of real progress. If the state is to make headway and develop and strengthen the early childhood workforce to ensure that the majority of the next generation can reach its full potential, the state needs to seize the chance to reform its system with bolder efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are seven recommendations for moving California forward.

1. Recognize the birth through third grade continuum. Create seamlessness between birth-to-5 and K-12 educators. California should build on the new Transitional Kindergarten law to grow the state’s professional development infrastructure in ways that equalize training and professional support across the birth-through-8 workforce. To do this, the state should heed the example of the “expanded TK programs” cropping up in some localities that enable four-year-olds to attend no matter what their birthdate.⁸⁰ Over time, the California Preschool Program should be merged with TK to build coherence in the workforce and expand access to all three- and four-year-olds regardless of their birthdate. However, this merger should proceed only if the credentialing system can be reformed to ensure that all teachers of young children—including those in TK, kindergarten, and ideally even first, second, and third grade—receive a credential that requires preparation in early childhood.

A merger will require attention toward supporting licensed child care centers *outside* of the public school system as well. Not only are these child care centers needed to increase capacity for high-quality early learning, partner with public schools, and provide care for the afternoon hours once children are dismissed from school, they are also critical for providing healthy and nurturing spaces for children younger than age three and helping to support working families.

2. Invest public dollars to address compensation disparities and working conditions. California will not be able to improve the quality of professional practice and build the pipeline of new professionals needed to care for the state’s growing population of vulnerable children without addressing the issues of compensation and working conditions for all early childhood professionals. It is unsustainable to continue requiring low-income parents to essentially foot the bill for teacher salaries in the younger years. The state must continue to improve reimbursement rates for licensed child care providers that meet standards of quality. Higher reimbursement rates alone, however, will not be enough. The state will also need to systematically bring formula funding for public education down into

the years of preschool (potentially through a merger of TK and the California Preschool Program, as described above). This will enable teachers of three- and four-year-olds to be seen on the same plane as teachers of kindergartners and above.

3. Strengthen workforce data systems and require participation in registries. Though the models of professional development and the strides the state has made in the past several years in attending to quality in its programs are promising, there is a missing link. As the data and evaluation systems are currently set up, they lack the information state decision makers need to understand which parts of the workforce are benefitting from investments in training. They also lack information on whether these programs are in fact improving the teaching practices of educators and caregivers or improving outcomes for children. California needs to continue to strengthen, align, and build its workforce registry for early childhood professionals and make participation mandatory.

4. Build incentives for early learning into local control funding formula decisions. Because California leaves funding decisions in the hands of localities, those localities have a responsibility to think comprehensively about how to ensure that their entire teaching workforce (not just TK-12 but also birth-to-5) has the support it needs to improve its practice. The state should stress this obligation by providing incentives for localities to direct LCFF money to build a stronger early childhood workforce. The state should also provide guidance on how to blend those efforts with existing efforts to support the early childhood workforce within communities, through First 5 California’s initiatives, for example. In addition, education and advocacy from the state level is needed to spread the word to local school board and superintendents that LCFF money can be used for preschool and early learning programs.

5. Update California’s teacher preparation and credentialing systems to ensure that teachers of young children (starting at age three and up through third grade) are required to have credentials that align with what research shows is best for young children. The commission should not perpetuate the divide between birth-through-5 teachers

and K–12 teachers, and should instead consider new credentialing structures that enable early childhood permits to work in tandem with credentials for teaching in elementary schools. The state’s credentialing system should account for the special skills needed to teach pre-K, TK, kindergarten, and the early grades. California had a credential with this specialization in the 1970s, and the state would do well to revisit that. However, in creating such a credential, the state should be careful not to create redundant credentials; in other words, avoid two disconnected licenses for elementary school teachers. Ideally, prospective teachers in the pre-K through third grades would come through a credentialing system in which they all receive the same PreK–3rd or PreK–2nd credential. If they would like to also teach in the later grades, they could do additional coursework or training to give them expertise in teaching older children. And, in the same way, a teacher of the older grades who would like to have the option of teaching in the younger grades would need to receive more training or some kind of credential in early childhood.

6. Coordinate and align the higher education system for early childhood professionals. California should continue and build on efforts to redesign and rethink early childhood education coursework in ways that would better align and equip teachers and leaders with specialized training they will need to work with children of this age group. Degree programs need to better link with the credentialing system to ensure that both coursework and course content effectively prepare TK teachers, kindergarten teachers, first-grade teachers, and other early childhood professionals.

The state should take advantage of its vast network of coaching, diversify and better compensate faculty, and expand hours of instruction. Additionally, the state should build in motivations for community colleges to gain accreditation from NAEYC, which has created standards for higher education institutions focusing on teacher preparation in the early years.

7. Retire the state’s English-only laws and put teaching dual language learners front and center.

The state’s regulations against the use of bilingual teaching in K–12 grades runs counter to the best practices for promoting literacy in young children. Under the current system, children may receive research-based instruction in both languages prior to entering kindergarten only to be thrown into a system that no longer allows them to continue learning in their native language. Or children may experience pre-K teachers who think they should adopt the K–12 way and speak in English only; the chances of receiving research-based pre-K instruction are low because California’s early learning workforce does not always have the tools and training it needs to work with the growing population of dual language learners. The state should boost its DLL focus within quality reform efforts like the QRIS and TK professional development on best practices in DLL instruction, and connect that work to what is happening inside public schools. Tools must be culturally sensitive and reliable for California’s DLL population. LCFF offers important opportunities for targeting resources to DLL students.

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

- **Catherine Atkin** – Executive Director, Early Learning Lab
- **Lea Austin** – Specialist, Center for the Study of Childcare Employment at the University of California, Berkeley
- **Kim Pattillo Brownson** – Director of Educational Equity, Advancement Project California
- **Teri Clark** – Director, Professional Services Division, Commission on Teacher Credentialing
- **Erin Dubey** – Child Development Consultant, First 5 California [e-mail interview]
- **Cecelia Fisher-Dahms** – Education Administrator, California Department of Education
- **Bridget Hamre** – Associate Director, The Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) at the University of Virginia
- **Vickie Ramos Harris** – State Director of Policy and Practice, Early Edge California
- **Whit Hayslip** – Independent Consultant; formerly Assistant Superintendent of Early Childhood Education, Los Angeles Unified School District
- **Lynn Karoly** – Senior Economist, RAND Corporation
- **Lisa Kaufman** – Executive Director, Educare of California at Silicon Valley
- **Camille Maben** – Executive Director, First 5 California
- **Meera Mani** – Director of the Children, Families, and Communities (CFC) Program, David and Lucille Packard Foundation
- **Peter Mangione** – Co-director, WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies
- **Debra McMannis** – Director of Child Development Division, California Department of Education
- **Scott Moore** – Consultant; former Chief Policy Advisor, Early Edge California
- **George Philipp** – Senior Program Associate, WestEd E3 Institute
- **Glen Price** – Chief Deputy Superintendent, California Department of Education
- **Heather Quick** – Principal Researcher, AIR
- **Fiona Stewart** – Program Director, Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles
- **Marcy Whitebook** – Director, Center for the Study of Childcare Employment, University of California Berkeley
- **Andrea Youngdahl** – Consultant; formerly Director, Department of Human Services, City of Oakland
- **Marlene Zepeda** – Professor Emeritus, Department of Child and Family Studies at the California State University, Los Angeles

NOTES

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