

Universal PreKindergarten Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Report

A Report to the Fiscal and Policy Committees of
the Legislature and the Department of Finance

Prepared by:

**The Early Education Division
Opportunity for All Branch
California Department of Education**

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Pursuant to Assembly Bill 185 (Chapter 571, Statutes of 2022),
which has been codified into *Education Code* Section 8202.6.

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Workgroup Members

At the heart of the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup and report development process are the Workgroup members themselves who generously contributed their time, expertise, and lived experience to this process. The following individuals graciously served as Workgroup members:

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Family Perspectives

- April 2023 Families Video Panel: <https://vimeo.com/819994283/87588bab80?share=copy>
- February 2024 Families Video Panel (Full Video): <https://vimeo.com/908786628/6eb4248261?share=copy>
- February 2024 Families Video Panel (Highlights): <https://vimeo.com/908781292/0d2c7fb32d?share=copy>

Educator and Implementer Perspectives

- July 2023 Implementer Video Panel: <https://vimeo.com/930428627/3b3d600e6e?share=copy>
- December 2023 UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup Field Survey Results: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YrM58D-wOyzJ_nBRChk8Wllw179cLvgM/view
- February 2024 Educator Video Panel (Full Video): <https://vimeo.com/908801279/2da6fb652b?share=copy>
- February 2024 Educator Video Panel (Highlights): <https://vimeo.com/908783826/32f240cf34?share=copy>

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	9
I. Background and Context	10
I.A Establishing the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup	12
I.B Values and Vision	15
I.C Unpacking the Importance of High-Quality Preschool	16
I.D Unpacking the Importance of a Mixed Delivery System: How Does a Mixed-Delivery System Offer High-Quality Early Learning Experiences for Children from All Backgrounds?	30
I.E Equity, Quality, and Access: The Current Context of Preschool in California	34
II. Recommendations	45
II.A System Acknowledgments	45
II.B Preschool Quality Standards Recommendations	47
II.C Intersectionality of Quality and Access	55
II.D Preschool Access Recommendations	58
II.E Other Considerations	62
III. Appendices	67
Appendix I: Working Definitions	67
Appendix II: Workgroup Members	69
Appendix III: Birth-to-Five Systems Issues That Are Beyond the Scope of the Workgroup	70
Appendix IV: Key Workgroup Resources	72
IV. Reference List	73

Executive Summary

The California State Legislature established the Universal PreKindergarten Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup (the Workgroup), directing the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the California Department of Education (CDE), in consultation with the Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the State Board of Education, to convene interest holders to make recommendations related to preschool quality and access, pursuant to Assembly Bill 185 (Chapter 571, Statutes of 2022), which has been codified into *Education Code (EC)* Section 8202.6. To ensure alignment with the most recent efforts of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) on teacher qualifications, CDE also included CTC as part of the state agency team.

In alignment with the California Master Plan for Early Learning and Care, the Legislature focused the scope of the Workgroup on preschool-aged children and the education quality standards and the regulations that are developed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction based on the statutory authority found in *EC* Section 8203. This Workgroup was charged with (1) providing recommendations on best practices for increasing access to high-quality universal preschool programs for three- and four-year-old children offered through a mixed-delivery model, (2) providing recommendations to update preschool standards pursuant to *EC* Section 8203, and (3) ensuring recommendations align with the work of the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care, without recommending new system changes that create increased state or local costs to offer preschool across the mixed-delivery system. The Workgroup's scope did not include all early learning and care programs across California's broad mixed-delivery system but did include Family Child Care Homes operating through a Family Child Care Home Education Network.

The Workgroup held a series of public meetings and advised the CDE from January 2023 through February 2024. Workgroup members and members of the public had opportunities to participate in three public surveys to inform this report. While not a consensus process, this report presents recommendations that received considerable support. This report summarizes the substantial body of research that supports the long-term learning benefits of children attending high-quality preschool, the evidence that key program quality elements correlate with improved child outcomes, and that the dosage of experiences matters. It also provides a summary of family perspectives on elements of quality and access. The report provides recommendations for preschool quality standards, recommendations for preschool access, recommendations at the intersection of both quality and access, and other considerations. You can find this report at the California Department of Education UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ce/upkmixeddelivery.asp>.

PHOTO BY DREW BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY





I. Background and Context

“History will judge us by the difference we make in the everyday lives of children.”

These words by Nelson Mandela, anti-apartheid revolutionary and political leader, ring true now, more than ever, as the state of California seeks to improve outcomes for all children by increasing access to high-quality preschool experiences.

Doing so requires acknowledgment that our nation has a complex history of both opportunity and oppression. Built on stolen land and stolen labor, America has been the land of dreams and aspirations for some, while serving as a place of systemic injustices for others. Like the nation, California must face this history of racism, colonialism, and systemic marginalization of specific groups of people. Doing so requires not only a commitment to social justice, but also action that prioritizes opportunities for those who have been most affected by compounding and intersecting injustices of race- and gender-based oppression, poverty, and inequality.

California has taken strides to make progress through significant investments in Universal PreKindergarten (UPK), Transitional Kindergarten (TK), and child care; the State Superintendent’s initiative to transform California’s schools with a focus on equity; and the Governor’s *California for All* agenda.¹ California is committed to continuing to do better by building upon this work and centering equity for all children through educational opportunities.

The Workgroup and the following report reflect California’s ongoing commitment to improvement focused on ensuring high-quality preschool experiences for the Golden State’s young children to support critical whole child school readiness skills and ultimately reduce the opportunity and academic achievement gaps.

The science of learning and development has made clear children are best positioned to reach their full potential when they experience ongoing, language-rich, nurturing, inclusive, and developmentally informed interactions with caring adults and peers in environments that foster their curiosity; embrace and affirm their culture, language, and community; support their social–emotional development, and guide their learning from the earliest possible moments. Babies begin learning in the womb and by the time they are preschoolers, they have already become natural explorers, scientists, and creators. The assets of our youngest learners—their language, culture, curiosity, and innate ability to learn—must be uplifted, embraced, and nurtured.

¹ Key terms will be defined in subsequent sections and in appendix I. The language authorizing the Workgroup uses the term PreKindergarten (PreK). The Legislature also defines “universal preschool” to mean those programs that offer part-day or full-day, or both, educational programs for three- and four-year-old children, and may be offered through a mixed-delivery system. The terms preschool and high-quality preschool will be used throughout this report to support consistency. UPK will also be used when discussing California’s specific approach to universal preschool implementation.

This report, like the Workgroup that informed the recommendations herein, focuses on educational preschool experiences for three- and four-year-old children, inclusive of TK. During this specific phase of child development, preschool educators can foster and guide children to pursue their curiosity, follow their interests, and build upon their emerging skills and knowledge across school-, community-, and home-based settings.² Preschool educators can foster development through play-based, joyful learning experiences that rely on self-directed, scaffolded, facilitated, and differentiated activities to meet children’s individual developmental needs.³ This report provides background and context on the importance of these experiences in nurturing optimal child development for all children, and presents recommendations on how to increase both the quality of and access to these experiences for preschool-aged children, with specific attention to advancing equity and opportunity for children with disabilities and children facing the greatest need.^{4,5}

When Governor Gavin Newsom took office in 2019, he committed to a “California for All”—a California that provides all children with a great start. The Newsom Administration, led by the California Health and Human Services Agency, in collaboration with the State Board of Education (SBE) and State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tony Thurmond, developed a [Master Plan for Early Learning and Care](#) (Master Plan), with a core objective to promote school readiness through preschool for all three-year-old children experiencing poverty and universally for all four-year-old children.⁶ Achieving this goal requires a dedication to improving preschool quality in a way that is child-centered; culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming; inclusive; and that supports playful learning and intentional instruction focused on whole-child development, including cognitive; social–emotional; physical; and math, language, and literacy development.⁷ It also requires increasing access to these learning experiences through a mixed-delivery approach. As outlined in a February 2024 Dear Colleague Letter from the federal Administration for Children and Families, “Mixed delivery preschool approaches should be inclusive of the full range of high-quality early care and education settings including community-based child care providers, schools, Head Start programs, and family child care homes.”⁸

Listening to the perspectives and interests of California’s most historically oppressed and marginalized families to center their voices on these issues is also core to achieving these goals.

This section of the *UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Report* will provide an overview of the establishment and charge of the Workgroup, unpack the significance of high-quality preschool learning opportunities and the importance of a mixed delivery system in ensuring equitable access to those opportunities. This section also highlights features of California’s current context of preschool quality and access.

² The term “preschool educators” is used to describe the teachers, teachers assistants, paraprofessionals, administrators, and aides that work in preschool programs, including those in community-, school-, and home-based settings operating preschool as part of a Family Child Care Home Education Network. This also includes TK educators.

³ Correa, David. 2017. “Quality 101: Identifying the Core Components of a High-Quality Early Childhood Program.” Washington, DC: *Center for American Progress*. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/quality-101-identifying-the-core-components-of-a-high-quality-early-childhood-program>.

⁴ As a general definition, preschoolers turn three or four years old prior to the beginning of the school year. For the purposes of CSPP, the definition of a three- or four-year-old child differs and is provided in EC Section 8205.

⁵ Children that face the greatest need may be experiencing low socioeconomic status, homelessness, involvement with the child-welfare system, childhood trauma, or other systematic forms of oppression and historical marginalization. Historically, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian, and Alaskan Native children have been disproportionately affected by the results of systemic oppression. It is also important to consider the impact of intersectionality for children with disabilities who also identify as members of groups that have experienced historic marginalization.

⁶ To access the Master Plan, see: California Health and Human Services Agency. 2020. *Master Plan for Early Learning and Care: California for All Kids*. Sacramento, CA: California Health and Human Services Agency. <https://californiaforallkids.chhs.ca.gov/home>.

⁷ In addition to the definition of inclusion provided by the U.S. Department of Education (see appendix I), creating a high-quality inclusive learning environment for preschool children necessitates considering their individual learning needs and acknowledging that what constitutes an inclusive learning environment may differ as children have varying needs.

⁸ Adarkar, S. and K. Hamm. 2024. *Dear Colleague Letter*. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ecd/Mixed%20Delivery%20DCL%202.26.24.pdf>.

I.A Establishing the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup

The Master Plan goals and recommendations stem from the substantial body of research that supports the long-term learning benefits of children attending quality preschool. Evidence also shows there are key program quality elements that correlate with improved child outcomes and that dosage of experiences matters—with more time in high-quality preschool experiences, such as two years of preschool or full-day programs, resulting in greater improvements to child outcomes.

The Workgroup was established to advance the Master Plan goal of promoting school readiness through targeted access to an additional year of publicly funded preschool for all three-year-old children from income-eligible households as well as children with disabilities and universal access for all four-year-old children to programs that offer part-day or full-day, or both, educational programs.⁹

The Legislature codified the Workgroup, directing the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the California Department of Education (CDE), in consultation with the Director of CDSS and the Executive Director of the SBE, to convene this UPK mixed delivery statewide interest holder Workgroup.¹⁰ To ensure alignment with the most recent CTC efforts on teacher qualifications, CDE also included CTC as part of the state agency team.

Workgroup Charge

In alignment with the Master Plan, the Legislature focused the scope of the Workgroup on preschool-aged children, the education quality standards that govern the California State Preschool Program (CSPP), and the regulations that are developed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction based on the statutory authority found in *EC* Section 8203.

This Workgroup is charged with:

1. Providing recommendations on best practices for increasing access to high-quality universal preschool programs for three- and four-year-old children, offered through a mixed-delivery model that provides equitable learning experiences across a variety of settings.
2. Providing recommendations to update preschool standards pursuant to *EC* Section 8203 to support equitable access to high-quality preschool and TK programs through the mixed-delivery model and across all appropriate settings and funding sources.
3. Ensuring that recommendations are in alignment with the work of the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care, without recommending new system changes that create increased state or local costs to offer preschool across the mixed-delivery system.¹¹

⁹ California Health and Human Services Agency. 2020. *Master Plan for Early Learning and Care: California for All Kids*. Sacramento, CA: California Health and Human Services Agency. <https://californiaforallkids.chhs.ca.gov/home>.

¹⁰ This is pursuant to Assembly Bill 185, which has been codified into *Education Code* Section 8202.6.

¹¹ For a list of recommendations from the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care, see: UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup. 2023. "Master Plan for Early Learning and Care Goals and Strategies." <https://drive.google.com/file/d/18MUyKqEYeaI-oQHyiiMEDtLwssPctXqS/view>.

The report recommendations—to modify portions of Title 5 of the *California Code of Regulations* (5 CCR) developed to implement *EC* Section 8203—focus on key quality elements including diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; family engagement; child-centered learning environments; and a well-prepared and supported workforce.

Programs not required to meet standards authorized in *EC* Section 8203 and 5 CCR regulations developed pursuant to that section could meet and regularly verify their adherence to the standards voluntarily as part of the UPK system.

The recommendations to increase access emphasize the importance of a mixed-delivery system in which families have genuine access to and choice among high-quality preschool programs in schools, community-based centers, and family child care home settings.

Informed by the Workgroup, the CDE has developed this final report, which is being provided to the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature and the Department of Finance.

Important Terminology

Unpacking the Workgroup’s legislative charge relies on clearly defining key terms. This section of the report presents specific state-defined terms that are foundational to the Workgroup’s charge and other working definitions that are important for understanding the report.

The Master Plan outlined a stated goal to provide high-quality universal preschool options for all three-year-old children experiencing poverty and with disabilities and universally for all four-year-old children. *EC* Section 8320 defines universal preschool as programs that offer part-day or full-day educational programs for three- and four-year-old children, that may be offered through a mixed-delivery system. In California, implementation of UPK includes TK, which is the only universal option and will be available to all four-year-olds by 2025–26, alongside an array of other preschool options, some of which are eligibility dependent, through a mixed-delivery system to promote parental choice.

More generally, high-quality universal preschool programs are programs that create the conditions for all children to thrive across key areas of quality—including child-centered learning environments, family engagement, workforce, and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging—informed by research and shaped by lived experience. High-quality universal preschool programs ensure educators are equipped to provide playful, intentional, and individualized learning experiences with responsive interactions and the intent to build cognitive, social–emotional, and physical development; and create nurturing, inclusive, and culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming environments that reflect family perspectives on quality in the communities they serve and provide foundational conditions, such as engaging family-style meal service that offers fresh, nutritious, and culturally relevant meals.

For the purposes of this Workgroup, which is charged with recommending changes to *EC* Section 8203 to improve preschool quality and for making recommendations to increase access to UPK more generally, high-quality UPK includes TK and preschool programs pursuant to *EC* Section 8320 that provide learning experiences, coordinated services, and referrals for families to access health and social–emotional support services, and that meet indicators of quality determined by the Superintendent pursuant to *EC* Section 8203.

Next, for the charge of the Workgroup, the Legislature has defined the preschool **mixed-delivery system** as

a system of early childhood education services that are delivered through a variety of providers, programs, and settings, including Head Start agencies or delegate agencies funded under the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 9831, et seq.), public, private, or proprietary agencies, including community-based organizations (CBOs), public schools, and local education agencies that offer center-based childcare and preschool programs, tribal childcare and preschool, and family childcare through a family childcare home education network.¹²



¹² See: *EC* Section 8320.

Workgroup Process

Assembly Bill 185 (Ch. 571, Stats. 2022), which added *EC* Section 8202.6, required the CDE to establish the Workgroup before the end of 2022.

Workgroup members were selected based on their experience working on quality and access issues in preschool programs and their roles representing specific interest holders in California. To create a workgroup that reflects the diversity of California's children and families, members applied through a public application process and were selected based on considerations including geography, race and ethnicity, roles, and time in the field.^{13,14} See appendix II for a list of Workgroup members.

The Workgroup held 11 public meetings and one pre-recorded webinar between January 2023 and March 2024.¹⁵ The Workgroup complied with the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, promoting transparency by including members of the public in the process. During meetings, members of the public submitted written public comments using Google Forms and were able to provide verbal public comments. Workgroup members engaged in discussions verbally in meetings and provided written comments using Discourse, a publicly viewable online forum.

The Workgroup served as a state body and recommendations were sourced through a three-phase process that provided formal opportunities for feedback from members of the public.¹⁶ The report was also developed through a multiphased process and drafts were posted to the California Educators Together website for Workgroup and public feedback.¹⁷ The report focuses on the direction provided by the Legislature and the required statutory scope.

While the Workgroup advised the CDE and collaborating state partners, it was not a consensus process. This report is responsive to input and feedback from Workgroup members and members of the public, within the Workgroup's narrow statutory charge. Some workgroup members and members of the public did not agree with specific definitions in the workgroup's statutory charge related to quality standards outlined in *EC 8203* and with the inclusion of Family Child Care Homes (FCCHs) as part of a Family Child Care Home Education Network (FCCHEN). Additionally, some matters elevated by Workgroup members and members of the public exceeded the scope of the Workgroup. These matters are highlighted in appendix III.



¹³ The Workgroup application process received nearly 300 applications.

¹⁴ As required by statute, the Workgroup includes representatives from County Offices of Education (COEs), contracted state preschool programs, including those operated by school districts and by CBOs, TK programs, tribal preschool programs, educators, the CTC, First 5, R&Rs, alternative payment programs, contracted general child care programs serving preschool-age children, Head Start, private center-based preschool providers, licensed family child care providers, researchers, and child development experts.

¹⁵ Workgroup meetings were generally held on the fourth Thursday of each month from 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

¹⁶ At the end of the first phase in August 2023, the Glen Price Group, the CDE contracted project management team, compiled a list of emergent recommendations from an analysis of presentations, resource materials, Workgroup members, and public comments in consultation with the CDE and state partners. During the second and third phases, from September 2023 to February 2024, members of the Workgroup and the public refined the list of emergent recommendations, within the overarching frame of the statute through feedback surveys and one-on-one conversations. This report was developed during the third phase.

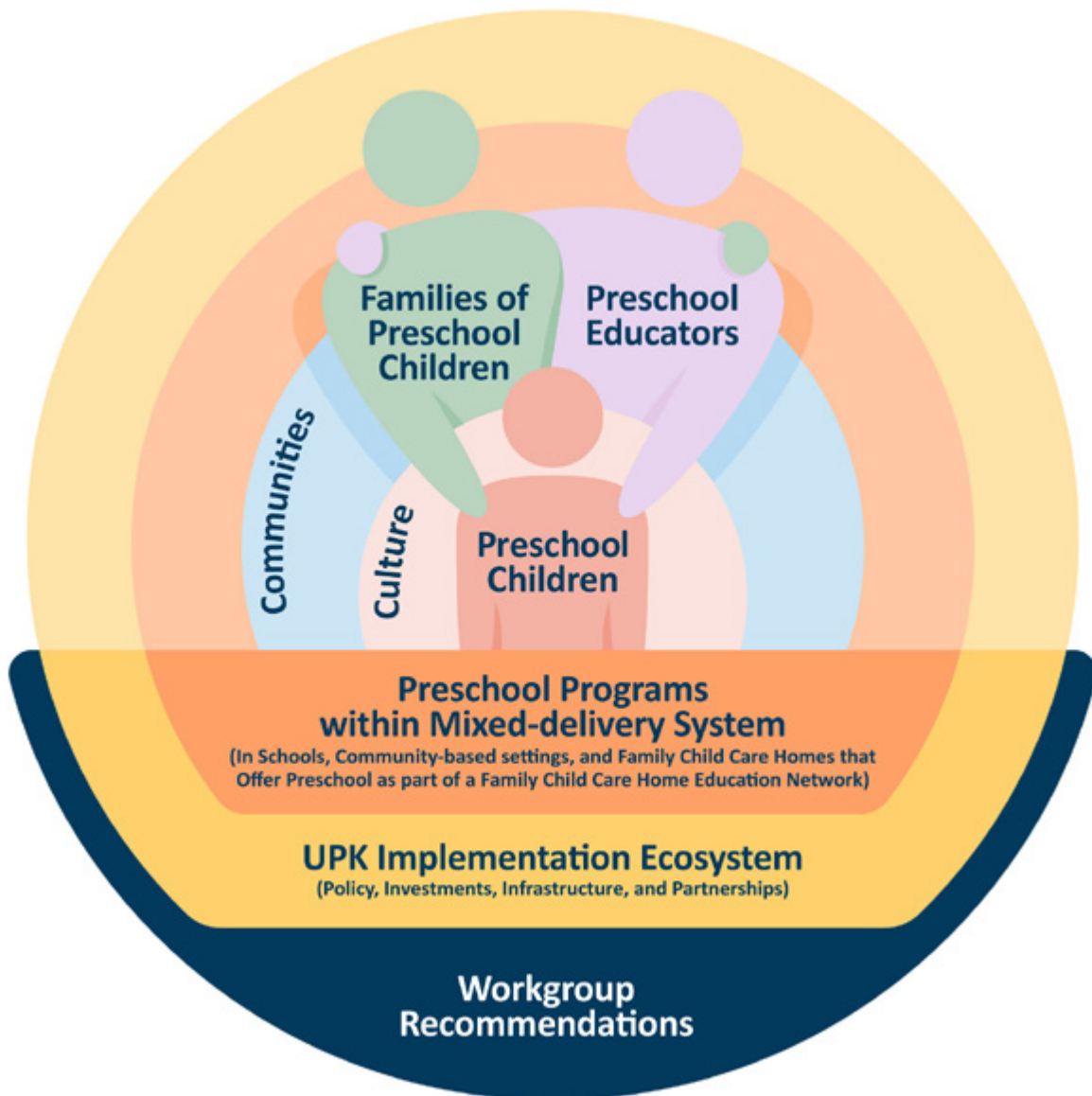
¹⁷ The Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup site can be accessed at California Educators Together: <https://www.caeducatorstogether.org/groups/bzsgmy7y/upk-mixed-delivery-quality-and-access-workgroup>.

I.B Values and Vision

The Workgroup coalesced around an understanding that high-quality preschool experiences, by definition, require a child-centered approach. A child-centered approach emphasizes the child and their holistic development as a fundamental driver of the learning process. The Workgroup informed the development and refinement of a graphic and a series of aspirational statements and identified ways in which the Workgroup could advance elements of this framework, given its charge.

The graphic centers preschool children, their families, and their educators within the environment of preschool programs in the mixed-delivery system and overarching UPK implementation ecosystem, inclusive of policies, investments, infrastructure, and partnerships. While the Workgroup’s recommendations are directed toward the graphic’s outer segments, the *UPK implementation Ecosystem and Preschool Programs within the Mixed-Delivery System*, the graphic illustrates that recommendations should be child-centered at their core. Child-centered recommendations support children’s access to high-quality experiences and outcomes, often by improving and increasing positive experiences and conditions for families and educators so that children thrive.

Graphic 1: Child-Centered Framework



The Workgroup understands that a child’s learning is affected not only by the preschool program they attend and their preschool educators, but also by the family, culture, and the communities to which they belong; by the ecosystem of policies, investments, infrastructure, beliefs, and partnerships that surround them; and by the intersection and interconnectedness of these influences. The Workgroup acknowledges that high-quality preschool programs implement policies and practices that are responsive to the needs of the children and families within their communities. The Workgroup believes all children deserve high-quality early education experiences and that equity and social justice must be foundational to all change.¹⁸

I.C Unpacking the Importance of High-Quality Preschool

There is significant evidence for the positive effects of high-quality preschool participation on children and for society.¹⁹ Even stronger outcomes have been found for children experiencing poverty. These impacts include improvements in key skills that set the foundation for learning in kindergarten, reduced grade retention, and earlier and better interventions and supports for students at risk of developmental delays or with identified disabilities.²⁰ In the longer-term, adults that benefited from attending a high-quality preschool program as children experienced better mental health outcomes, increased educational attainment, increased rates of home ownership, higher levels of income, and increased civic engagement. While children in both full-day and part-day preschool programs make learning gains, children in full-day programs (six to eight hours) make larger gains than children in programs lasting fewer than three hours.²¹ Further, while children make significant gains in a single year of high-quality preschool, children who attend two years of high-quality preschool see larger gains.²²

Importantly, the short- and long-term benefits of high-quality preschool experiences for children can either be reinforced or diminished by the transition to and quality of early elementary school experiences. Specifically, early elementary experiences can accelerate, maintain, or stall the trajectory of children’s development and learning.²³ California is committed to providing a strong and early start to education for all children with high-quality, joyful, developmentally informed, inclusive, rigorous, and aligned preschool through third grade (P–3) learning opportunities—beginning with equitable access to high-quality universal preschool (also known as UPK).

High-quality programs should be defined by core elements that have been linked to the improvement in child outcomes and promising practices that support equitable and developmentally appropriate learning experiences. Evidence from one of the longest-standing longitudinal preschool studies demonstrated strong outcomes for Black or African American children, including increased high school graduation rates, increased rates of employment, higher earnings, and higher rates of home ownership.²⁴ The field of preschool quality research is growing, with more to learn about what best supports children’s outcomes, especially for Black or African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, other specific racial and ethnic populations, and Dual Language Learners and Multilingual Learners.²⁵

¹⁸ For the Workgroup’s vision and values for all the elements depicted in Graphic 1: Child-Centered Framework, see UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup. 2023. This graphic can be found on the Google Drive web page at “UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup Child-Centered Framework.” <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Sk31eT5KS2K2wWeMOZ7SK2YbGXZJUPrw/view>.

¹⁹ See the definition of “High-Quality Universal Preschool” in appendix I and the section of this report titled “What Research Says About Defining Quality,” for additional information about the Workgroup’s definition of high-quality preschool.

²⁰ Meloy, Beth, Madelyn Gardner, and Linda Darling-Hammond. 2019. *Untangling the Evidence on Preschool Effectiveness*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

²¹ Atteberry, Alison, Daphna Bassok, and Vivian C. Wong. 2019. “The Effects of Full-Day Prekindergarten: Experimental Evidence of Impacts on Children’s School Readiness.” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 41(4): 537-562.

²² Reynolds, A. J. 1995. “One year of Preschool Intervention or Two: Does it Matter?” *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 10(1), 1-31.; Wen, Xiali, Christina Leow, Debbie L. Hahs-Vaughn, Hon Korfmacher, and Sue M. Marcus. 2012. “Are Two Years Better Than One Year? A Propensity Score Analysis of the Impact of Head Start Program Duration on Children’s School Performance in Kindergarten.” *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 27(4), 684-694.

²³ Rucker C. Johnson. 2023. *Synergistic Impacts of Expansions in PreK Access & School Funding on Student Success*. Unpublished manuscript.

²⁴ Schweinhart, Lawrence J., and David P. Wikart. 1980. *Young Children Grow Up: The Effects of the Perry Preschool Program on Youths Through Age 15*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

²⁵ “Dual Language Learner” (DLL) is defined in EC Section 8205 as children whose first language is a language other than English or children who are developing two or more languages, one of which may be English. The CDE uses the term multilingual learner to be inclusive of children who may be learning more than two languages. Multilingual learners will be used throughout the rest of the report to include DLLs as well.

Importantly, emergent tools, such as the Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Access Scale (ACES), are improving the field's ability to measure preschool quality including culturally and linguistically affirming practices, while centering racial equity as a foundational aspect of quality.²⁶ Nevertheless, clear evidence demonstrates that the impacts of high-quality preschool as an early intervention strategy can be dramatic, particularly for children with disabilities.²⁷

Evidence also suggests that to achieve the outcomes described above, preschool programs, regardless of the setting in which they operate, require programmatic support to implement high-quality early learning opportunities. Such support—including ongoing professional learning, coaching, and continuous improvement efforts—is especially critical for implementing developmentally appropriate curriculum and play-based learning experiences that nurture each child's early development.²⁸

Established brain science and empirical research are only part of the equation for defining and understanding the importance of high-quality preschool. The perspectives and expectations of families are also critical to understanding the necessary elements of high-quality preschool experiences for all children across mixed-delivery settings, particularly for children with disabilities and children from historically marginalized communities. This is especially true around issues of belonging, equity, systemic oppression, and discrimination. These issues must be considered when discussing high-quality preschool experiences and when making families aware of their preschool options.

What Research Says About Defining Quality

Landmark studies have found remarkable benefits of high-quality preschool for children, specifically children from families that are socially and economically disadvantaged, children of color, children with disabilities, multilingual learners, and children with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).²⁹ Research has attempted to understand how the features of these programs supported children to thrive as a means to replicate these features in other programs and for more children. These features are described in the subsections that follow; however, the Workgroup acknowledges that some research on preschool program quality has systematically left out the voices and experiences of underrepresented children and families. The research community is beginning to acknowledge the significant need for additional research that better reflects the diverse cultural and linguistic assets of all children, families, and educators and explores how to ensure all children and families thrive. The Workgroup also acknowledges that a robust understanding of high-quality preschool requires both research and family and practitioner voice and experience. Providing high-quality preschool experiences necessitates the implementation of research-based practices in ways that are responsive to community and cultural context to best meet the needs of the children and families served.

Despite the complex intersection of research and experiences, policymakers and program administrators must pursue tangible parameters that capture the essence of a high-quality preschool program or experience. Some elements of quality have been easier to quantify and measure than others. Over the years, researchers have come to a consensus about certain elements that substantially contribute to experiences that are most likely to support children to grow and thrive in preschool and beyond.³⁰

²⁶ Curenton, Stephanie M., Iheoma U. Iruka, Marisha Humphries, Bryant Jensen, Tonia Durden, Shana E. Rochester, Jaqueline Sims, Jessica V. Whittaker, and Mable B. Kinzie. 2020. "Validity for the Accessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACES) in Early Childhood Classrooms." *Early Education and Development* 31(2): 284-303.

²⁷ Kilburn, M. Rebecca, Lynn A. Karoly, and Jill S. Cannon. 2005. *Proven Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

²⁸ Bredekamp, Sue, and Carol Copple. 1997. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*. Revised Edition. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

²⁹ According to the Center for Disease Control, adverse childhood experiences are potentially traumatic experiences, such as neglect, experiencing or witnessing violence, and having a family member attempt or die by suicide, that occur in childhood. See: Center for Disease Control and Prevention. 2023. Risk and Protective Factors. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/riskprotectivefactors.html>.

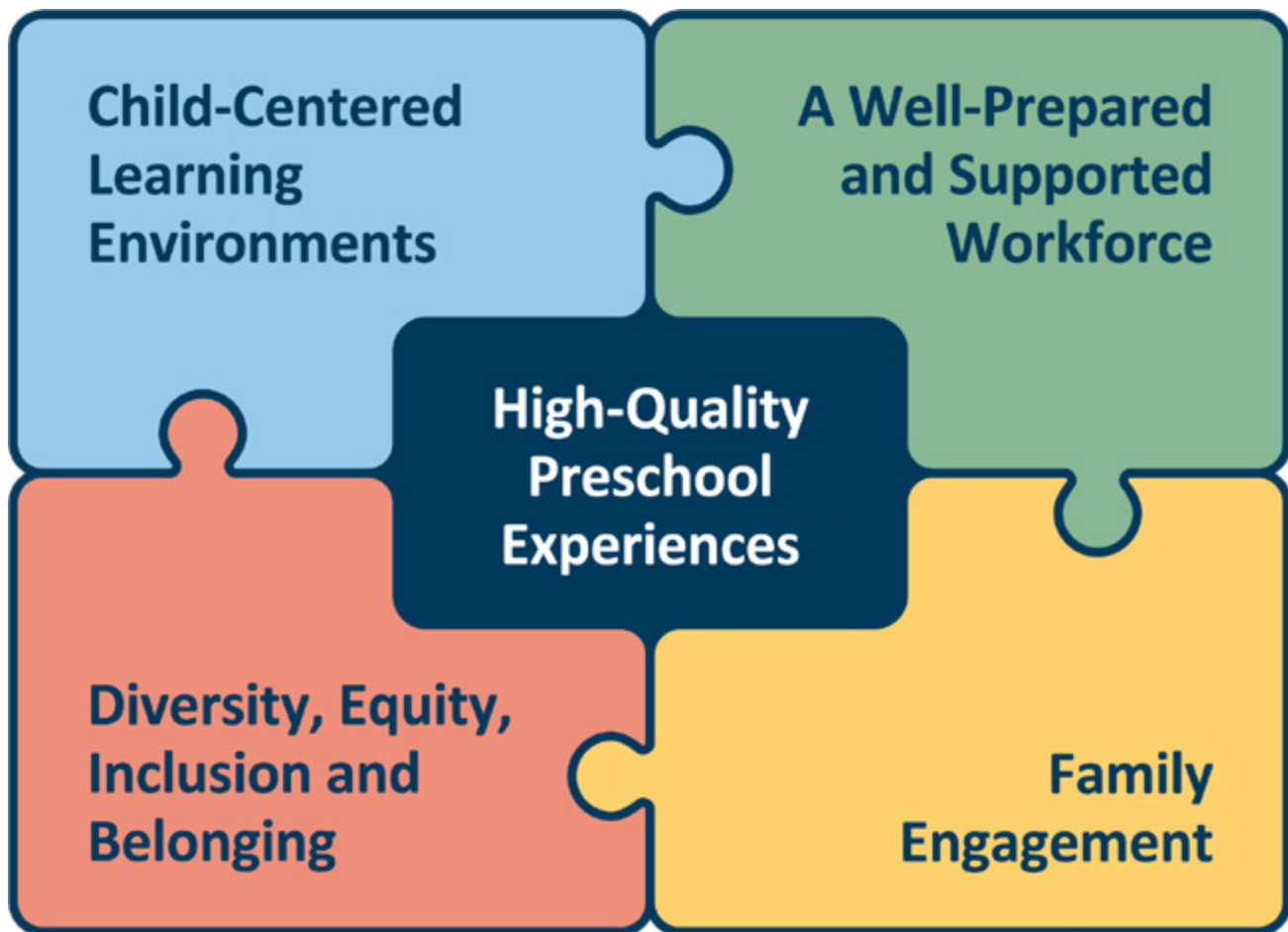
³⁰ Wechsler, Marjorie, Hanna Melnick, Anna Maier, and Joseph Bishop. 2016. *The Building Blocks of High-Quality Early Childhood Education Programs*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/292/download?inline&file=Building_Blocks_Early_Childhood_Education_04202016.pdf.

Researchers also agree that high-quality early learning experiences can occur in any setting—from schools to community-based centers to family child care homes—when educators and administrators are supported to implement the elements of quality most closely linked to positive child outcomes.

The Workgroup used a framework, guided by current research, for understanding quality that includes four key areas: diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; family and community engagement; a child-centered learning environment; and well-prepared and supported educators.

The evidence presented within this framework was used to develop the recommendations found in Part 2 of this report.

Graphic 2: Framework for Quality



Research on Quality: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Regarding preschool experiences, the Workgroup defines equity as access to resources, opportunities, and experiences for children that result in positive outcomes that are not associated with children’s demographic characteristics.³¹ This means children must have equitable access to high-quality early learning experiences that meet their needs and support their development across the mixed-delivery system. High-quality early learning experiences require an intentional focus on supporting all children equitably, with attention to the strengths and needs of children who are children with disabilities, multilingual learners, and children who have experienced ACEs such as low socioeconomic status, homelessness, involvement with the child welfare system, childhood trauma, and children who have experienced the repercussions and intersections of systematic forms of oppression and historical marginalization.

There are numerous factors and unique circumstances that should be considered when individualized education program (IEP) teams are discussing service and placement options for students with disabilities. The first placement option the IEP team should consider is the regular, early childhood program that the child would attend if they did not have a disability (see appendix I for a working definition of inclusion). However, there are some unique populations, such as those students who are deaf or hard of hearing, where equitable and inclusive access may include being educated in classrooms containing other deaf and hard of hearing children and adults. These specialized environments may ensure that the students’ unique language, communication and related needs are properly addressed. In this regard, the least restrictive environment for deaf and hard of hearing children may be one in which students have direct access to language and communication and are able to directly engage other deaf and hard of hearing peers and adults.³² When discussing equity, access, and placement, these are just a few important considerations that families should discuss with their child’s IEP team.

Equitable access is also responsive to the regional differences among urban, rural, and suburban settings, such as access to services, funding inequities, and availability of a variety of program settings.³³



³¹ See appendix I for the Workgroup’s definition of equity.

³² California Department of Education. 2023. *Position Statement of Language Access*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ss/dh/positionstmnt.asp#change>.

³³ For example, children in rural communities are less likely to have access to licensed early learning programs than other children. See: Stipek, Deborah, Iheoma U. Iruka., and Deborah Phillips. 2023. “Defining Child-Centered Quality: Research Evidence and Considerations” Memo developed for the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ptGwEdmHb6x6D3Gw3ze-bfTg1Gncee3w/view>.

Evidence suggests that particular practices best support the learning of children from historically marginalized communities, and that these practices are important across settings offering preschool experiences. These include (1) connections to children’s home language, traditions, and lived experiences; (2) fun and engaging content and interactions that build on children’s positive racial and self-identity; (3) clear expectations within an affirming and responsive relationship; and (4) use of fair, nonjudgmental disciplinary practices free of microaggressions and harsh disciplinary consequences.³⁴ Related to the use of fair disciplinary practices, research supports greatly limiting exclusionary disciplinary practices, such as suspension and expulsion, which disproportionately affect children of color (particularly Black or African American children) and children with disabilities.^{35,36}

Research also suggests that anti-bias and anti-racist training can support educators and staff to address their own biases and help to ensure they are equipped to challenge discrimination experienced by historically marginalized communities and individuals with intersecting identities.³⁷

Research on Quality: Family and Community Engagement

Families are children’s first and most important teachers. Countless studies show families’ knowledge of child development, attitudes about parenting, and parenting practices are associated with positive child outcomes across developmental domains.³⁸ Research shows family engagement in preschool settings is related to better school readiness for children.³⁹ Furthermore, studies on family engagement in Head Start also show correlations with improvements in children’s early literacy skills and reduced aggressive behavior.^{40,41}

Community engagement is also linked to family and child well-being.⁴² Access, through connections and direct referrals from preschool programs, to community resources, including libraries, community centers, and social service providers, improves both parenting practices and children’s health and academic outcomes.⁴³ There is some evidence that the partnership and quality of the community, home, and school relationship is especially critical and beneficial for children who have experienced ACEs, are multilingual, or reside in rural regions.⁴⁴ Although the research is not clear on the exact activities that matter most, it is clear that affirming and supporting family language and culture and strong community engagement are foundational to high-quality early learning experiences and, ultimately, child outcomes.⁴⁵



³⁴ Stipek et al., “Defining Child-Centered Quality.”

³⁵ Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education. 2021. *An Overview of Exclusionary Discipline Practices in Public Schools for the 2017-2018 School Year*. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-exclusionary-school-discipline.pdf>.

³⁶ In alignment with research on the negative impacts of exclusionary discipline in early education, Governor Newsom signed Assembly Bill 2806 into law in September 2022, which prohibits expulsion and suspension from state-funded preschool and child care programs unless as a last resort due to validated safety concerns. AB 2806 additionally requires data collection and reporting on exclusionary practices, strengthened mental health consultation practices, and family support. See: Early Edge California. 2022. *AB 2806 (Rubio) – Suspension and Expulsion in Early Learning [Fact Sheet]*. <https://earlyedgecalifornia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Fact-sheet-AB-2806.pdf>.

³⁷ Stipek et al., “Defining Child-Centered Quality.”

³⁸ Stipek et al., “Defining Child-Centered Quality.”

³⁹ Barnett, Melissa A., Katherine W. Paschall, Ann M. Mastergeorge, Christina A. Cutshaw, and Shannon M. Warren. 2020. “Influences of Parent Engagement in Early Childhood Education Centers and the Home on Kindergarten School Readiness.” *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 53(4): 250-273.

⁴⁰ Stipek et al., “Defining Child-Centered Quality.”

⁴¹ Lang, Sarah N., Shinyoung Jeon, and Erin Tebben. 2023. “Relationships Between Families and Head Start Staff: Associations with Children’s Academic Outcomes through Home Involvement and Approaches to Learning.” *Early Education and Development*: 1-18.

⁴² Stipek et al., “Defining Child-Centered Quality.”

⁴³ Stipek et al., “Defining Child-Centered Quality,” 9.

⁴⁴ Stipek et al., “Defining Child-Centered Quality,” 9.

⁴⁵ Stipek et al., “Defining Child-Centered Quality,” 4.

Research on Quality: A Child-Centered Learning Environment

Children thrive through well-supported experiences in rich learning environments and through intentional learning activities. Play, within the context of intentional and scaffolded learning activities, directly supports children’s learning and development across cognitive, social, emotional, and physical domains.⁴⁶ The risks children take while playing teach them by testing their limits, challenging them to grow, and providing opportunities to learn how to overcome obstacles and cope with frustrations. Playful learning occurs on a continuum and in multiple settings. High-quality preschool programs support preschool educators to use play-based learning strategies that include activities along this continuum (see graphic 3), from child-directed to educator-guided to educator-directed play-based activities.

Graphic 3: P–3 Play-based Learning Strategies⁴⁷



Research demonstrates that a high-quality curriculum with a specific scope and sequence across math, language, and literacy with embedded social–emotional learning can be implemented through playful learning activities that engage and meet the needs of individual children. Developmental assessments provide preschool educators with information about individual children’s development, including children with disabilities and children who are multilingual learners. Developmentally appropriate assessments allow educators to use curricula as intended and meet each child where they are, in every domain of development. Effective developmental assessments need not include high-stakes testing practices, nor should they provoke anxiety for children or their families. Developmental assessments should instead inform instruction, guide parents and, whenever possible, inform policy decision making to support children’s progress. While the ability of preschool educators to individualize instruction is instrumental to children’s developmental gains, both curriculum and assessment require implementation support. Support could include ongoing, pre-service, and in-service professional development and learning to ensure preschool educators can implement these tools with fidelity.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Brooks, Jennifer, Chrisanne Gayl, and Ellen Roche. 2023. “California Title 5 Preschool Standards: Analysis and Recommendations Regarding Quality Evidence.” Memo developed for the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NQPSXVmn4HXe7eL-V08J-sZicNGyTDF0/view>.

⁴⁷ California Department of Education. 2023. California’s Great Start Transition to Elementary School Toolkit: Supporting a Smooth and Effective Transition to Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and First Grade.

⁴⁸ Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families. 2019. *A Spotlight on Professional Development in Head Start: FACES Spring 2017*. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/spotlight-professional-development-head-start-faces-spring-2017>.

Research on multilingual learners' language and literacy development indicates the benefits of promoting home language in early education programs. Programs that use home language for instruction or provide home language support, and provide English language development instruction have the most long-lasting benefits for multilingual learners.⁴⁹ Essential characteristics of early education programs for language and literacy development of multilingual learners include language-rich and print-rich learning environments; active and positive engagement with text in the home language and in English, rich oral (or signed) language and wide vocabulary development in multiple languages; phonological awareness in and through multiple languages, including signed languages; and cross-linguistic connections and metalinguistic awareness.⁵⁰ Moreover, research suggests that early educators who are culturally competent and have more training on how to educate multilingual learners were able to have a positive impact on learning outcomes.⁵¹

For children who are deaf or hard of hearing, language-rich opportunities are critical. While hearing children have myriad incidental opportunities to learn language (for example, listening to conversations around them, hearing the television, hearing children banter at a playgroup), these learning opportunities and experiences must be direct, intentional, and accessible for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.⁵² Because most children who are deaf or hard of hearing are born to hearing parents, families may not have the information, tools, resources, or fluency with American Sign Language to provide language-rich environments in the first few years of their children's lives. This makes language deprivation a significant problem for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and makes language access in preschool even more important for this population of children.⁵³



⁴⁹ Herrera, Socorro. G., Martha Martinez, Laurie Olsen, and Sonia Soltero. 2022. *Early Literacy Development and Instruction for Dual Language Learners in Early Childhood Education*. National Committee for Effective Literacy. https://multilingualliteracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/NCEL_ECE_White_Paper.pdf.

⁵⁰ Herrera et al., "Early Literacy Development and Instruction."

⁵¹ Ramírez, Rica, Lisa M. López, and John Ferron. 2019. "Teacher Characteristics That Play a Role in the Language, Literacy and Math Development of Dual Language Learners." *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 47(1), 85–96.

⁵² Neild, Raschelle, Patrick Graham, and Katie Taylor. 2023. "An In-depth Analysis of Topics in Deaf Education in Early Childhood Education." *Perspectives on Early Childhood Psychology and Education* 5(2). <https://digitalcommons.pace.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1056&context=perspectives#Abstract>

⁵³ Neild, Graham, and Taylor, "An In-depth Analysis of Topics in Deaf Education in Early Childhood Education."



Finally, research demonstrates the benefits of educating children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.⁵⁴ The joint policy statement from the Federal Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, reaffirms that all young children with disabilities should have access to high-quality, inclusive early childhood programs that provide individualized and appropriate support so they can fully participate alongside their peers without disabilities and achieve their full potential.⁵⁵ Strategies, such as embedded instruction and implementing Universal Design for Learning are particularly important for ensuring children with disabilities are set up for success and that they can authentically participate in learning alongside their typically developing peers.⁵⁶ Not only do inclusive programs benefit children with disabilities in their academic,⁵⁷ language,⁵⁸ and social–emotional skills,⁵⁹ but typically developing children also demonstrate a greater ability to understand others’ emotions and develop a more positive attitude toward individuals with disabilities.⁶⁰

For children who are deaf and hard of hearing, the least restrictive environment may be in a program that provides a language-rich environment where they have direct access to language, communication, social interactions with other deaf and hard of hearing peers and adults. Without access to this type of environment, deaf and hard of hearing children may experience language deprivation, social isolation, and exclusion. A truly child-centered learning environment is one that addresses all of these issues.

⁵⁴ Lawrence, Shamila, and Sheila Smith. 2016. “Preschool Inclusion: Findings From Research and Implications for Policy.” *Childcare & Early Education Research Connections*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED579178.pdf>.

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education. 2015. *Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs*. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/earlylearning/joint-statement-full-text.pdf>.

⁵⁶ Universal Design for Learning is a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all children based on scientific insights into how humans learn; it is a way of looking at learning environments and laying out flexible paths to firm goals. California Department of Education. 2020. “UDL in a Distance Learning Environment Webinar” [Webinar]. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/udlapril24webinarnotes.asp>.

⁵⁷ Rhoad-Drogalis, Anna, and Laura M. Justice. 2020. “Is the Proportion of Children With Disabilities in Inclusive Preschool Programs Associated With Children’s Achievement?” *Journal of Early Intervention* 42(1): 83-96.

⁵⁸ Justice, Laura M., Jessica AR Logan, Tzu-Jung Lin, and Joan N. Kaderavek. 2014. “Peer Effects in Early Childhood Education: Testing the Assumptions of Special-Education Inclusion.” *Psychological Science* 25(9): 1722-1729.

⁵⁹ Odom, Samuel L., Joann Vitztum, Ruth Wolery, Joan Lieber, Susan Sandall, Marci J. Hanson, Paula Beckman, Ilene Schwartz, and Eva Horn. 2004. “Preschool Inclusion in the United States: A Review of Research from an Ecological Systems Perspective.” *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* 4(1): 17-49.

⁶⁰ Rhoad-Drogalis and Justice. 2020, “Is the Proportion of Children With Disabilities in Inclusive Preschool Programs Associated With Children’s Achievement?”

Research on Quality: Well-Prepared and Supported Educators

Relationships are the foundation of all child development and learning. Children thrive in the context of warm, nurturing, and stable relationships with adults.⁶¹ The ability of preschool educators to establish strong and supportive relationships with every child they serve is critical to providing a high-quality early learning experience across all settings within the mixed-delivery system. In addition, an educator’s well-being affects their ability to cultivate strong, positive relationships with all children.⁶² However, preschool educators often experience ongoing stress related to inadequate compensation, poor working conditions, and turnover in the field, which affects the quality of care and education children receive.⁶³

Educator preparation also has an impact on an educator’s ability to provide child-centered learning environments that support child outcomes. Evidence suggests a relationship between educators whose preparation includes degree attainment and improved child outcomes. A meta-analysis of 32 studies indicated that children whose teachers had a bachelor’s degree had better early education outcomes than children whose educators had lower levels of educational attainment.⁶⁴ A study of public preschool programs with strong evidence of effectiveness reported that all require at least a bachelor’s degree for lead teachers and offer higher compensation and robust professional learning opportunities to these educators.⁶⁵

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⁶¹ Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. 2016. “From Best Practices to Breakthrough Impacts: A Science-Based Approach to Building a More Promising Future for Young Children and Families.” Cambridge, MA: Harvard University. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/from-best-practices-to-breakthrough-impacts>.

⁶² Zinsler, Katherine M., Courtney A. Zulauf, Vinodharen Nair Das, and H. Callie Silver. 2019. “Utilizing Social-Emotional Learning Supports to Address Teacher Stress and Preschool Expulsion.” *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 61: 33-42.

⁶³ Powell, Anna, Elena Montoya, Lea J.E. Austin, Yoonjeon Kim, Wanzi Muruvi, and Abby Copeman Petig. 2023. *Teachers of Preschool-Age Children in California*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/publications/brief/teachers-of-preschool-in-california>.

⁶⁴ Kelley, Pamela and Gregory Camilli. 2007. “The Impact of Teacher Education on Outcomes in Center-Based Early Childhood Education Programs: A Meta-analysis.” New Jersey: National Institute for Early Education Research. <https://nieer.org/research-library/impact-teacher-education-outcomes-center-based-early-childhood-education-programs>.

⁶⁵ The Master Plan for Early Learning and Care recommended moving in this direction for preschool programs primarily serving four-year-old children. Based on evidence from: Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. 2015. *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/19401>.

Regardless of degree attainment, research is clear that educators need specific competencies to effectively support optimal child development, especially for multilingual learners and children with disabilities. While a formal preparation and degree program is one way to develop the competencies early educators need, these skills and abilities can also be supported through alternative pathways such as apprenticeships and other job-embedded learning opportunities, and through other mechanisms that honor adult-learning styles and support the professional growth of a linguistically diverse workforce.⁶⁶ Regardless of how an educator is prepared to facilitate developmentally appropriate preschool experiences, the quality of the preparation and professional learning they receive matters. There is evidence to suggest the content of individualized educator preparation and professional development have a positive impact on the quality of education and care provided in settings (for example, coursework in early childhood education and effective pedagogy).⁶⁷

Attention should be paid to the extent to which preparation and professional learning opportunities are evidence-based, culturally responsive, inclusion-focused, and accessible to current and prospective early educators from diverse backgrounds. Enhancing the preparation of and support provided to educators who are serving as lead teachers in UPK settings is an important strategy for advancing preschool quality.⁶⁸

High-quality preschool programs support preschool educators with ongoing, effective, job-embedded professional learning and coaching that support the pedagogy of early childhood, inclusion, cultural and linguistic responsiveness and affirmation, healing-informed practices, and confronting bias.⁶⁹ High-quality programs ensure educator-to-child ratios that are reasonably small enough for educators to form strong relationships with every child in their care; acknowledging that these ratios may differ based on their educator preparation and other supports they are given. High-quality preschool programs also support strong site leadership and administration and ensure leaders have knowledge of what developmentally appropriate experiences and environments for preschool-aged children include.

What California Families Say About Quality

A high-quality mixed-delivery system must be responsive to the aspects of preschool that families identify as important. Many of these aspects align closely with the program quality standards that research shows have a positive impact on child and family outcomes. Recognizing the importance of family perspectives and lived experiences, the Workgroup uplifted family voice throughout its process, both directly through a panel of family members and through focus groups, interviews, and surveys of families with children ages birth to five conducted by Catalyst California and the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE).^{70,71} Both Catalyst California and PIQE sought the perspectives of families from historically underserved communities. Focus groups and the survey conducted by Catalyst California were broader in nature (birth through preschool), but some findings apply to families' preschool experiences. The focus groups conducted by PIQE were more narrowly focused on preschool experiences, specifically.

⁶⁶ Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. 2015. *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*. Washington DC: National Academies Press.

⁶⁷ Stipek et al., "Defining Child-Centered Quality."

⁶⁸ Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8*.

⁶⁹ See appendix I for a definition of inclusion.

⁷⁰ In 2022, Catalyst California conducted 14 virtual focus groups that engaged 110 parents to intentionally elevate the voices of families of color and historically underserved communities in California. All focus group participants had children ages birth to five, and were conducted in English, Spanish, or Somali. Focus groups included the following voices: Black or African American, Latinx, Pacific Islander, South Asian, and Indigenous and Native American families, and young parents (ages eighteen to twenty-four) including those from rural, low-income, farmworker, immigrant, and refugee communities. Catalyst California also disseminated a statewide online survey to families with children aged birth to twelve, with questions related to access to quality early learning and care. A total of 3,867 families completed the survey. Respondents were primarily Latinx (38 percent) and White (36 percent), followed by Asian (13 percent) and Black or African American (12 percent), and the vast majority of respondents identified as female (78 percent). Fifty-seven percent of respondents had children ages birth to five. See: Catalyst California. 2023. "CDE UPK Workgroup Memo (February and April 2023)." Memo developed for the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UoEvxcQK3PrK4TXl9lhqaShrgwBMYB5v/view>.

⁷¹ In February 2023, PIQE conducted three focus groups with 40 participants (parents, grandparents, and other primary caregivers) regarding their perspectives on early education for their three-to-five-year-old children. The participants identify as Latino (15), Mixtec (10), and Black or African American (15). See: Parent Institute for Quality Education. 2023. "Family Perspectives Towards Universal Pre-K." Memo developed for the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ux8NDzXywcNDUyWQ607Zfk0Ln7KTF4H/view>.

The Workgroup also heard a series of interviews with families whose children are enrolled in bilingual or tribal preschool programs about what matters to them about those preschool experiences. Results from these efforts are summarized below. Importantly, families typically reflect on their children’s early learning and care experiences along a continuum from birth and did not talk about what matters most to them in programmatic siloes (for example, preschool versus infant and toddler care). This is reflected in the perspectives elevated below.⁷²

It is also important to note that families often started with a focus on the importance of ensuring the health and safety of their children above all, which aligned with the concepts outlined by psychologist Abraham Maslow, which placed physiological, safety, and security needs at the base on the hierarchy of needs as it pertains to human development and self-actualization.⁷³ The perspectives of California families mirror the responses of families in a national survey conducted by the Bipartisan Policy Center on early education preferences.⁷⁴

The perspectives from families presented in this section were used to develop the recommendations found in Part 2 of this report.



⁷² In addition to the focus groups and surveys conducted by Catalyst California and PIQE, the following sources contributed to the analysis of California families’ perspectives on quality. The family perspectives uplifted here provide valuable information but do not necessarily reflect the perspectives of all California families.

- First 5 California. 2023. “Strengthening a Mixed-Delivery System of Early Care and Education: A First 5 Position Paper.” Sacramento, CA: First 5 California. https://www.cfc.ca.gov/pdf/about/organization/policy/F5CA_Mixed_Delivery_Position_Paper_2023.pdf.
- Zepeda, M. 2022. “Listening to Chinese, Filipino, and Latinx Family Childcare Providers During the Pandemic: Implications for Serving Dual Language Learners and Their Families Coach Summary.” Long Beach, CA: Californians Together. https://californiantogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Family-Child-Care-Providers_Coach-Summary_093022-Reupload-2.pdf.
- Early Edge California. 2020. “Early Edge Hosts September 2022 Parent Advisory Group Meeting.” <https://earlyedgecalifornia.org/early-edge-hosts-september-2022-parent-advisory-group-meeting>.
- Pryor, Laura, and Mary Ignatius. 2018. “Waiting to be seen. Demanding to be heard. Parent Recommendations to the CA Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education.” Oakland, CA: Social Policy Research Associates. <https://www.spra.com/resource/waiting-to-be-seen-demanding-to-be-heard>.
- Quality Counts California and School Readiness Consulting. 2023. “Equity Project: Key Findings and Considerations Presentation.” Presentation delivered on February 27, 2023. https://drive.google.com/file/d/19tPo_VtAkCyMNFpAYjIiKyrUNPvZbuMh/view.
- California Childcare Resource and Referral Network. 2022. “The Love Connection: What Quality Means to California Childcare Providers and Families.” San Francisco, CA: California Childcare Resource and Referral Network. <https://rrnetwork.org/policy/the-love-connection>.

⁷³ Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370-396. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>.

⁷⁴ The Bipartisan Policy Center conducted a survey in December 2020 of a national sample of 1,500 parents of children ages birth to five. The interviews were conducted online. Among a number of questions, respondents were asked about the important factors considered in January 2020 and in December 2020 to understand family preferences regarding early education programs before and during COVID-19. See: Bipartisan Policy Center. 2021. “Childcare Market Survey Analysis.” Presentation delivered in January 2021. <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/download/?file=wp-content/uploads/2021/01/BPC-MC-Child-Care-Analysis-Jan-2021.pdf>.

Family Perspectives on Quality: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Families view the learning environment as an important element of a quality early learning and care setting. Specifically, they value a nurturing learning environment that respects their children’s cultural background, language, and ability or exceptional needs. As such, families emphasize that programs should use culturally, linguistically, racially, and ability-affirming practices that are free from bias.⁷⁵ Perceived racial biases or a family’s personal experiences with racism and bias can deter families of color from enrolling in specific programs if families fear these programs will expose their young children to a harmful social–emotional environment. Many families view quality programs as those that can support their children’s cultural and linguistic practices and can help foster their children’s sense of belonging. This opinion was also expressed by parents who were interviewed about their experiences enrolling their children in tribal preschool programs.

Families also value language access and support. Latino and Mixtec families elevated the importance of language support for themselves and their children.⁷⁶ Similarly, families report a desire for their children to learn their home languages as a way to remain connected to their family and culture. During a focus group session, a Mixtec participant shared: “A bilingual teacher would be the best for my child,” expressing fear their child would lose their language.⁷⁷ During the Workgroup’s parent panel, one grandparent shared a similar reflection: “A good teacher who is bilingual would be preferable ... because my grandson doesn’t know any English at the moment. He’s been raised speaking only Spanish at home.”⁷⁸ In the parent interviews, parents of children enrolled in bilingual preschool programs highlighted the importance of their children developing and maintaining their home language, allowing them to have deeper connections with family, community, and culture.

In addition, families uplifted the importance of support for children with disabilities through their shared challenge of finding an inclusive program. Findings from Catalyst California highlight that families struggled to find programs with educators appropriately trained to support their children.⁷⁹ As a result, it may be harder for families of children with disabilities to have meaningful choices of preschool programs for their children, or may be more challenging to find an option that meets their other needs, such as proximity to home or work, or the type of setting they prefer.



⁷⁵ During one of the Catalyst California focus groups, a Somali participant shared their views on culturally affirming learning environments, saying “If they feel racism, that will stay with them forever. So, if we want to make them feel good, we have to take them somewhere where they belong culture-wise and where they can relate to.” Additionally, a Pacific Islander parent shared a desire for their children to learn about their culture, saying “If there was more exposure for the Pacific Islands at such a young age, it would be really nice to see so they can see people who look like them and they are learning something about themselves.” See: Catalyst California. 2023. “CDE UPK Workgroup Memo (February and April 2023).” Memo developed for the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UoEvxcQK3PrK4TXl9lhqaShrgwBMYB5v/view>.

⁷⁶ Parent Institute for Quality Education. 2023. “Family Perspectives Towards Universal Pre-K.” Materials developed for the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ux8NDzXywacNDUYwQ607Zfk0Ln7KTF4H/view>.

⁷⁷ Parent Institute for Quality Education, “Family Perspectives Towards Universal Pre-K.”

⁷⁸ Barrera Bahena, Sofia. 2023. “Parent Panel.” Panel at UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup meeting on April 27, 2023. <https://vimeo.com/819994283/87588bab80?share=copy>.

⁷⁹ Reflecting on the quality of options for their child, during a Catalyst California focus group, a participant shared: “I feel like they need to be trained on special needs kids, because he had autism and ADHD [...] So maybe they have a little bit more training on how to handle different special kids.” See: Catalyst California, “CDE UPK Workgroup Memo.”



Family Perspectives on Quality: Family and Community Engagement

Families shared the need to be informed about their preschool options. Once enrolled, families have a desire for frequent and ongoing communication in relation to their children’s safety, progress, and development.⁸⁰ Families of color, in particular, expressed interest in engaging with educators around their family’s cultural values, norms, and traditions to foster a connection between home and the learning environment.⁸¹ One participant from Catalyst California’s “Indigenous/Native American” focus group described the authentic family engagement of their child’s preschool: “I love it because they really are family oriented. Any of the events they do, they allow the family to participate. Not just the child but siblings, aunts, uncles, grandfathers. They do a graduation ceremony that is a cultural one.”⁸² Moreover, families of color highlighted the importance of preschools that build welcoming and trusting relationships. During one of the PIQE focus groups, Black or African American families described their experiences in early education and their perceived impact of race on their ability to access early education opportunities.⁸³

Language access was identified as important to authentic family engagement. A Mixtec focus group participant shared challenges communicating with their child’s school: “I had an experience where my son went through school a whole year [and I could not communicate] with my son’s teacher because she only spoke English.”⁸⁴

Family Perspectives on Quality: A Child-Centered Learning Environment

Across survey results and focus groups of parents with children ages birth to five, physical and psychological safety emerged as the first consideration of families. This was also true for the results of the national survey.⁸⁵ Safety, particularly psychological safety, is supported by the cultural and linguistic practices described above that can help foster a sense of belonging. Focus group participants identified the importance of responsive and individualized attention for their children and how this can be supported by low child-to-educator ratios.

⁸⁰ Catalyst California, “CDE UPK Workgroup Memo.”

⁸¹ Catalyst California, “CDE UPK Workgroup Memo.”

⁸² Catalyst California, “CDE UPK Workgroup Memo.”

⁸³ Parent Institute for Quality Education. “Family Perspectives Towards Universal Pre-K.”

⁸⁴ Parent Institute for Quality Education. “Family Perspectives Towards Universal Pre-K.”

⁸⁵ In the Bipartisan Policy Center survey, families identified safety as the most important factor when selecting an early childhood program. See: Bipartisan Policy Center. “Childcare Market Survey Analysis.”

Families value an early learning environment that supports social–emotional learning and development. Families discussed the importance of helping children understand their feelings and fostering positive socialization and interactions with others.⁸⁶ A Hmong focus group participant said that social–emotional learning in early education is “very important because it goes along with their social skills. Because they’re still learning how to express themselves.”⁸⁷

Families also value environments and educators that support play-based learning experiences to support the development of early math and literacy. Put simply by one focus group participant, “They can learn their colors, words, letters, and many other things while playing.”⁸⁸

Family Perspectives on Quality: Well-Prepared and Supported Educators

For many families, the expertise and training of preschool educators are synonymous with high quality across mixed-delivery settings. Families value educators with training and necessary pedagogical experience to provide play-based and developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for their children.⁸⁹ During the PIQE focus groups, families from the Black or African American community defined a high-quality preschool setting as one where educators earned certificates and credentials; possessed professionalism; and demonstrated responsibility, integrity, accountability, and excellence; had training to aid their child in any medical situation; and provided high-quality teaching.⁹⁰ One parent from the focus groups shared their view on the importance of educator expertise and qualifications: “Not everybody has the early childhood development experience background. There’s a difference between babysitting and making sure children are healthy and offering a child development experience.”⁹¹ Families in the national survey also indicated accreditation and licensing of early educators as an important factor when selecting an early childhood program.⁹²

When asked for their perspectives on educators in high-quality preschool settings, families also identified traits related to relationship building and creating a comfortable learning environment, using words like: respectful, patient, courteous, competent, fair, kind, empathetic, caring, friendly, truthful, mindful, attentive, professional, and gentle.⁹³ Focus group participants also elevated the importance of consistency in staffing and continuity of care to facilitate the development of strong child-educator and family-educator relationships.



⁸⁶ Parent Institute for Quality Education. “Family Perspectives Towards Universal Pre-K.”

⁸⁷ Parent Institute for Quality Education. “Family Perspectives Towards Universal Pre-K.”

⁸⁸ Parent Institute for Quality Education. “Family Perspectives Towards Universal Pre-K.”

⁸⁹ Catalyst California. “CDE UPK Workgroup Memo.”

⁹⁰ Parent Institute for Quality Education. “Family Perspectives Towards Universal Pre-K.”

⁹¹ This parent also spoke to their intentional choice in seeking a home-based setting for their children as they believe in the expertise of preschool educators in this setting to provide a high-quality learning environment and experience. See: Tupaz, Paul. 2023. “Parent Panel.” Panel at UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup meeting on April 27, 2023. <https://vimeo.com/819994283/87588bab80?share=copy>.

⁹² The accreditation and licensing of the early educators was the third most important factor families consider when selecting an early education program for their child. See: Bipartisan Policy Center, “Childcare Market Survey Analysis.”

⁹³ Parent Institute for Quality Education. “Family Perspectives Towards Universal Pre-K.”

I.D Unpacking the Importance of a Mixed Delivery System: How Does a Mixed-Delivery System Offer High-Quality Early Learning Experiences for Children from All Backgrounds?

California has a broad mixed-delivery system of early education and child care programs that serve children from birth through school age. In this mixed-delivery system, early education and child care services are provided through various programs and providers in school-, community-, and home-based settings. Most of these programs are licensed and follow the licensing requirements specified in Health and Safety Code, Chapter 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6, commencing with section 1596.70 and CCR Title 22. Others, like care provided by family, friends, neighbors, some local educational agency (LEA) preschools serving four-year-old children only, or summer and after-school programs, are license-exempt. Other programs that include education standards, such as CSPP and TK, follow respective 5 CCR standards and *Education Code* requirements, while Head Start recipients, including Tribal and Migrant Head Start, follow Head Start Program Performance Standards.⁹⁴ The General Child Care Program (CCTR), the California’s Children With Severe Disabilities (CHAN), the Family Child Care Education Home Networks (FCCHEN) Program, and the Migrant Child Care Development Program (CMIG), administered by CDSS, currently follow many of the standards outlined in 5 CCR that apply to the CSPP, with notable exceptions related to incorporating results of developmental assessments into the educational program and support for developmentally informed practice, serving children with disabilities, as well as classroom interaction assessment requirements, and at present, requirements related to the Family Language Instrument and Family Language and Interest Interview.⁹⁵ The CDSS standards are currently located in 5 CCR Chapter 19 and *Chapter 19.5* (sections 18270.5–18434) and issued pursuant to the authority in WIC Section 10208, while the CSPP program standards are located in 5 CCR *Chapter 18.5* sections 17701–17721 and are issued pursuant to authority in EC Section 8203 (within the scope of this Workgroup). The CDSS is required to update its standards pursuant to WIC Section 10206 by December 31, 2025, as part of the 2021 transition of child care programs from CDE to CDSS. These programs are not required to follow the quality standards that are within the purview of this Workgroup pursuant to EC 8203, but are required to follow quality standards developed pursuant to WIC 10208, which are currently similar.⁹⁶

Importantly, the Legislature included a more specific definition of mixed-delivery system, as indicated in *Section I.A Establishing the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup* and in appendix I, which is “a system of early childhood education services that is delivered through a variety of providers, programs, and settings, including Head Start agencies or delegate agencies funded under the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 9831, et seq.), public, private, or proprietary agencies, including CBOs, public schools, and local education agencies that offer center-based childcare and preschool programs, tribal childcare and preschool, and family childcare homes through a Family Childcare Home Education Network.”⁹⁷

The Workgroup recognizes and uplifts the diversity of children in California and recognizes that access to high-quality early learning experiences that meet diverse child and family needs is best achieved through a mixed-delivery approach to providing high-quality preschool.⁹⁸ The inclusion of school, center-, and home-based options facilitates a diversity of settings for families to choose from based on their needs, preferences, and experiences while maintaining a child-centered focus on quality standards. Families may need to access multiple options to meet their needs. This is particularly true given the geographic variation of California and the ability of a mixed-delivery system to support access to high-quality education in a range of settings in rural, urban, and suburban settings. The Workgroup holds that a child-centered mixed-delivery system for UPK is one that is asset-framed and equity-oriented in its approach to supporting all communities and cultures.

⁹⁴ To view the current Head Start Performance Standards, see: Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. 2023. “Head Start Program Performance Standards.” <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii>.

⁹⁵ The CDE is working on regulatory changes to implement statutory requirements to serve a minimum proportion of children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms.

⁹⁶ To view a crosswalk of Title 22, Title 5, and TK program, see: UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup. 2023. “Crosswalk of Important Information and Requirements - Licensing, CSPP, Head Start, and Transitional Kindergarten.” https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cPwJ4nCssBIKQXVN_CLHL4gl2XOvois/view.

⁹⁷ Pursuant to Assembly Bill 210 (Ch. 62, Stats. 2022), which has been codified into EC Section 8320. <https://legiscan.com/CA/text/AB210/id/2600056>.

⁹⁸ These sentiments were recently expressed in the First 5 California “Mixed Delivery Position Paper,” which states, “California faces an important moment in the history of its early childhood system-building efforts. At this moment, we can bolster and strengthen the rich tapestry of providers and programs across our mixed-delivery model.” See: First 5 California. “Strengthening a Mixed-Delivery System of Early Care and Education.”

What Research Says About a Mixed-Delivery System⁹⁹

Every state allows for a mixed-delivery system in public preschool programs, with the exception of Hawaii. According to the National Institute on Early Education Research (NIEER), in the 2020–21 school year, at least eight states served more than half of children in state-funded preschools outside of public-school settings. Nearly half of all state preschool programs across 24 states allow for state preschool funding to go to FCCH providers.¹⁰⁰ Despite this allowance, few states report serving preschool-aged children in this setting.

Research suggests that increasing the number of options families have for preschool programs across mixed-delivery settings helps meet their needs.¹⁰¹ Research also suggests that different programs across the mixed-delivery system need intentional support to implement evidence-based quality standards associated with improved child outcomes.¹⁰² The research, however, is less definitive on the policy pathways for states to expand mixed-delivery preschool options.

One example of this limited research is a collection of studies in five state or local mixed-delivery systems to understand the effect of program, classroom, and child characteristics on child outcomes.¹⁰³ These systems include Boston, New York City, Seattle, New Jersey, and West Virginia.¹⁰⁴ The study examined systems based on whether the quality standards they set were the same or different across mixed-delivery settings. This study did not focus on home-based settings, but findings related to different quality standards in school-based versus community-based settings were notable. The study found that, on average, children enrolled in community-based preschool programs entered those programs with lower scores in math and language skills than children entering school-based settings. It also found that across sites, White children were consistently disproportionately likely to enroll in public school preschool programs. In the sites studied, public school preschool teachers were more likely to be White. Public school preschool teachers were also more likely to have advanced degrees.

With regard to quality measures and child outcomes, overall, CBO programs had lower Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) scores than public school preschool programs. Children in community-based preschool programs made smaller gains in language, math, and executive functioning skills across sites than children in public school settings, which is especially notable as research demonstrates that children who enter preschool with lower scores have greater potential for larger gains.¹⁰⁵ The study found no differences between CBO and public school preschool students in the gains they made in executive functioning skills.¹⁰⁶

The study also examined important structural differences (such as pay parity for educators, curricula, and use of assessments) between settings that require consideration to promote equitable learning opportunities and outcomes. Importantly, in one locality where there were more similarities between settings in pay parity, teacher qualifications, and use of curricula, CBOs and public preschool programs had similar levels of quality.

⁹⁹ The term “mixed delivery” can have layers of definitions depending on whether it is used to describe the full range of birth to school-age early learning and child-care experiences, or in a more limited way, to describe the state’s UPK system for delivering preschool and TK services. For the purposes of this report, the research presented here focuses on mixed-delivery models for preschool implementation to the extent possible.

¹⁰⁰ In a survey of state administrators of preschool programs, at least 17 states reported that children may have been served in FCCHs in 2019–20. However, only 10 states were able to report the number of children served in this setting. See: Connors-Tadros, Lori, and Tracy Jost. 2023. “Mixed Delivery in State Funded PreK Programs: Summary of the Presentation by NIEER to the California UPK Mixed Delivery Workgroup.” Memo developed for the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup. https://drive.google.com/file/d/194sWMIqB7sPBdxHI2hqYzf_b76L67fDf/view.

¹⁰¹ Bipartisan Policy Center. 2021. “Building Bipartisan Support for Childcare Toolkit: 2021 Update.” Washington, DC: Bipartisan Policy Center. <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/download/?file=/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/BPC-Child-Care-Toolkit.April-2021.pdf>.

¹⁰² Weiland, Christina, Meghan McCormick, Jennifer Duer, Allison Friedman-Kraus, Mirjana Pralica, Samantha Xia, Milagros Nores, and Shira Mattera. 2022. “Mixed Delivery Public Prekindergarten: Differences in Demographics, Quality, and Children’s Gains in Community-Based Versus Public School Programs Across Five Large-Scale Systems.” *EdWorkingPaper*: 22-651.

¹⁰³ Weiland et al., “Mixed Delivery Public Prekindergarten.”

¹⁰⁴ The sample included 2,395 children in 383 classrooms in 152 schools and 1,541 children in 201 classrooms in 103 CBOs.

¹⁰⁵ McCormick, Meghan. 2023. “Learning from Five State and City PreK Systems to Inform Design of an Equitable, High-Quality Mixed-Delivery PreK System in California.” Memo for the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup on March 13, 2023. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-Sc9xn5N3kibnuPPre1kYBiZJG5zHaR1/view>.

¹⁰⁶ Jost, Tracy, Lori Connors-Tadros, and Meghan McCormick. 2023. “Mixed Delivery in State Funded PreK Programs. Presentation to the Workgroup. Presentation to the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup on February 23, 2023.” <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dOQZreUGrlsYmx5-xqHnQP1GIXjhE5D/view>.

This study also found that even when policies were similar across settings, children in CBOs still had fewer gains in academic and cognitive outcomes (particularly language, math, and executive functioning). This suggests a need to implement even more intensive support for CBO programs if data indicates children attending those settings are more likely to be from marginalized groups, more likely to begin preschool scoring lower on academic and cognitive assessments, or both. Finally, the study found evidence that implementing evidence-based curricula, supported by coaching and training, can promote equity across settings by having particularly large impacts in community-based settings.¹⁰⁷

The evidence presented in this section was used to develop the recommendation in Part 2 of this report.

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What California Families Say About Mixed Delivery

The nation's mixed-delivery system has been shaped by policies that perpetuate injustice for culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse children, families, and preschool educators.¹⁰⁸ California can work toward a more equitable and child-centered system by listening to what the families of preschool-age children say about mixed delivery while ensuring that every setting provides the high-quality early learning environment families say they want and children deserve.¹⁰⁹

California is a linguistically, culturally, and economically diverse state, reflected in the range of perspectives and beliefs that families have about the mixed-delivery system.¹¹⁰ Families hold a wide range of preferences and priorities, which vary depending on family structure, culture, ethnicity, community, and geography.

¹⁰⁷ McCormick, Meghan. 2023. "Learning from Five State and City PreK Systems."

¹⁰⁸ Lloyd, Chrishana M., Julianna Carlson, Hannah Barnett, Sara Shaw, and Deja Logan. 2022. *Mary Pauper: A Historical Exploration of Early Care and Education Compensation, Policy, and Solutions*. Updated. Bethesda MD: Child Trends. https://earlyedcollaborative.org/assets/2022/04/Mary-Pauper-updated-4_4_2022_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁰⁹ The Workgroup uplifted the voices of families across California through a family panel and focus groups and surveys conducted by Catalyst California and PIQE, as described previously.

¹¹⁰ Families typically speak about mixed delivery in terms of where their child receives preschool services or child care. Families do not typically use the term mixed delivery, which is early education policy jargon.

During the parent panel of the April 27, 2024, Workgroup meeting, one parent highlighted their experience facing limited choices for their child with a disability.¹¹¹ Similar experiences were shared by focus group participants. One parent panelist summarized the importance of having access to options, including in rural areas:

It's really important to have various options. I think we need to take a look at that. What are the benefits [of family child care homes] especially in rural areas—very, very rural areas? There is a comfort level when you have providers that share values and share background and understanding and so I think it's really important that we explore that and see how the resources can really meet the needs.¹¹²

Catalyst California's research suggests families with children from birth to age five want access to “affordable, quality early learning and care that provides the full hours of care needed, basic needs, and programmatic support for specific young child populations.”¹¹³ The PIQE research builds on this by identifying core components that parents may consider when choosing settings for their child, such as distance and proximity, safety of setting, transportation options, costs, supports, and the quality of the program, including educator qualifications and positive learning environments.¹¹⁴ Families identified challenges related to program hours and shared experiences of having to adjust schedules or take time off of work as a result.

Without choice, families engage in trade-offs when selecting the setting for their children. Families may desire specific program elements such as low teacher-to-child ratios, multilingual capacity, and representation of diverse populations in settings. At times, those preferences may be incompatible with other choices like setting, hours of program operation, proximity to home, or availability at all.¹¹⁵ California's UPK implementation must respond to family preferences by ensuring that high-quality preschool is accessible to families in multiple setting types.

The evidence presented in this section was used to develop the recommendations found in Part 2 of this report.



¹¹¹ Goodpasture, Season. 2023. “Parent Panel.” Panel at UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup meeting on April 27, 2023. <https://vimeo.com/819994283/87588bab80?share=copy>.

¹¹² Tupaz, Paul. “Parent Panel.”

¹¹³ Catalyst California. “CDE UPK Workgroup Memo.”

¹¹⁴ Parent Institute for Quality Education. “Family Perspectives Towards Universal Pre-K.”

¹¹⁵ Child Trends. 2023. “Identifying Families’ Needs and Preferences and Their Barriers to Accessing Preschool.” Materials developed for UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AarSRct7D5qd3Y9RqsDMEWupO2IFQCeT/view>.

I.E Equity, Quality, and Access: The Current Context of Preschool in California

This section reviews relevant data and descriptions of the current state of preschool quality and access in California with specific attention to equity. Promoting equity requires shedding light on the current preschool context. It also requires examining the intersectional identities of California’s preschoolers and their families to ensure that programmatic approaches to quality account for the rich diversity of assets and needs. Lastly, it requires reflection on the active and ongoing efforts to counteract systemic oppression and combat racism and discrimination.¹¹⁶

The UPK implementation ecosystem must be strengths-based and equity-oriented in its treatment and approach to supporting all children, families, communities, and cultures to be truly high-quality, accessible, and child-centered.

Equity in California’s Preschool System

The current context of preschool—including issues related to quality and access—must be understood with an eye toward the root causes of systemic inequities both nationally and in California. These include systemic racism, classism, sexism, ableism, and Euro-centric beliefs that form the foundation on which the nation’s systems were built.¹¹⁷ The infrastructure of California’s early learning and care system has likewise relied on the chronic undervaluing of caregiving or “women’s work.” Lower required qualifications, and lower compensation for caregiving positions, including early education, compared to similar positions in other fields, reflect the undervaluing of caregiving as well as an undervaluing of educators in early education settings, such as preschool.¹¹⁸ Additionally, an overarching and ongoing underrepresentation of the voices of families and educators has influenced how quality has been defined and how investments have been made, with decisions often occurring without the consultation of those most affected.¹¹⁹

The historical evolution of early learning and care systems currently affects children’s and families’ sense of belonging and the extent to which children and families have equitable and authentic access to high-quality preschool experiences across settings. Furthermore, increasing access to quality early childhood programs can have an immediate impact on children’s school readiness skills, such as social–emotional development, language, literacy, and mathematics. Doing so requires combining the research and evidence for increasing quality with the evidence for increasing access to the preferences and needs of families, especially those who have traditionally been furthest from opportunity.



¹¹⁶ Given the statutory focus, this section will present data on access to programs that meet *Education Code* standards or Head Start standards and is offering a preschool learning experience for three- and four-year-old children.

¹¹⁷ Audism is a specific form of ableism that impacts the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. Historically, children who are deaf or hard of hearing struggle academically, partly because of deprivation and /or language delayed development, which may result in academic challenges. The CDE *Position Statement on Language Access* supports the right of deaf and hard of hearing children to have access to appropriate, ongoing, and fully accessible educational opportunities. See: California Department of Education. 2023. “Position Statement of Language Access.” Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ss/dh/positionstmnt.asp#change>.

¹¹⁸ McLean, Caitlin, Lea J.E. Austin, Marcy Whitebook, and Krista L. Olson. 2021. *Early Childhood Workforce Index - 2020*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/report-pdf>.

¹¹⁹ California Department of Social Services. 2022. *A Report by the Rate and Quality Workgroup*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Social Services. [https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/CalWORKs/CCT/CCDD/Rate%20and%20Quality%20Stakeholder%20Workgroup%20Report_August%202022_FINAL%20ADA%20\(2\).pdf?ver=2022-08-24-081240-333](https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/CalWORKs/CCT/CCDD/Rate%20and%20Quality%20Stakeholder%20Workgroup%20Report_August%202022_FINAL%20ADA%20(2).pdf?ver=2022-08-24-081240-333).

Preschool Quality in California¹²⁰

California has been at the forefront of quality early education and child care services for over 70 years.¹²¹ In alignment with the values that led President Lyndon B. Johnson to establish Head Start, CSPP in 1965 and established a different set of standards than those followed by Head Start programs. This was to provide educational experiences to low-income children who would not be eligible for the new Head Start program.¹²² In this regard, California recognized the value of high-quality early education experiences more than half a century ago. In 2008, California approved the Jones Bill and enacted the largest preschool program at that time in the nation by moving the majority of direct subsidized contracts serving three- and four-year-olds in center-based programs into the CSPP, and in subsequent years shifting substantial funding from the CCTR budget item into the CSPP budget item to support this change. CSPP is administered through contracts between the CDE and school-based programs, CBOs, and FCCHENs that support FCCHs to offer CSPP in home-based settings.

California again made strides with the launch of TK in 2012, which offers a high-quality preschool experience for four-year-olds. With intended alignment to the California Preschool Learning Foundations and fully implemented by 2025–26, TK will be universally available and free of cost for all four-year-old children as part of California’s TK–12 public education system, thereby becoming the largest fully universal program in the nation for all four-year-olds.

TK also follows different standards than those governing CSPP.¹²³ Notably, TK educators must possess a teaching credential and:

1. At least 24 units in Early Childhood;
2. As determined and documented by the LEA employing the teacher, professional experience in a classroom setting with preschool age children meeting the criteria established by the governing board or body of the LEA that is comparable to the 24 units of education described in Option 1; or
3. A Child Development Teacher Permit, or an Early Childhood Education Specialist Credential, issued by the Commission (*EC* Section 48000(g)(4)).

TK must use a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate (*EC* Section 48000(d)) and has a requirement for annual instructional minutes of 36,000 minutes per year (*EC* sections 46207 and 47612.5). It is the intent of the Legislature that TK curriculum be aligned to the Preschool Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF) (*EC* Section 48000(f)). Additionally, TK programs must maintain an average of at least one adult for every 12 pupils and maintain an average TK class enrollment of not more than 24 children (*EC* Section 48000(g)). Starting at full implementation in 2025–26, the statute requires TK to maintain an average of one adult for every 10 pupils (*EC* Section 48000[g][3]). Finally, LEAs receive subgrants funded by Title II, Part A of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act that provides supplemental funding to help support effective instruction and can be used to improve teacher and principal quality, which includes induction programs, professional development and support for professional growth, equitable access to quality educators, and recruitment for hard-to-find educator positions (20 *United States Code* 6601). Similar to other grades in the TK–12 system, TK implementation is governed by locally elected school boards that maintain local control for oversight.

¹²⁰ California has many types of early learning and care programs, but for the purposes of the Workgroup, this section will focus on the Preschool Quality Standards outlined by *EC* Section 8203, which are the standards within the purview of the Workgroup’s recommendations.

¹²¹ In 1943, California recognized the value of child care services, and therefore, continued to provide these services to women after World War II. California was the only state to continue these centers (under the administration of the CDE).

¹²² California Department of Education. 2023. *Child Care and Development Programs - CalEdFacts*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/op/cefccdevprograms.asp>.

¹²³ TK follows standards outlined for schools generally and for kindergarten more specifically along with specific standards and requirements enumerated in *EC* in sections 48000, 48000.1, and 48000.15.

It is important to acknowledge that there are differences in opinion about how quality is defined and whether preschool programs across mixed-delivery settings have equitable access to the quality improvement systems and infrastructure needed to support continuous quality improvement. While conversations about what elements of quality make a difference, and for whom, were part of this Workgroup, there is some recent research that is helping inform the evidence base that quality makes a difference. This includes a recent California study, “Preschool Quality and Child Development: How Are Learning Gains Related to Program Ratings?,” which investigated the relationship between Quality Counts California (QCC) rating tiers and children’s learning and developmental outcomes.¹²⁴ It found that children in higher-tier programs, as determined by QCC, demonstrated more learning and development than those in lower-tier programs.¹²⁵ It also found that multilingual learners, children with disabilities, and children from all racial and ethnic groups exhibited more learning and development in higher-tier programs, although some of these differences were not statistically significant, likely due to small sample sizes in some of the groups.¹²⁶ Additional research may be needed, however, to understand which particular factors in higher-tier programs drive improved child outcomes.



This Workgroup is charged with making recommendations to update preschool standards pursuant to *EC* Section 8203. Subchapter 2 of 18.5 of Division 1 of 5 *CCR* details the quality standards specific to the Workgroup. These standards are included and summarized in appendix IV and further analyzed in subsequent sections.¹²⁷ Importantly, quality standards are implemented within broader community, cultural, philosophical, and regulatory environments that go beyond what is outlined in program quality standards and must be considered part of California’s overall approach to preschool quality. It is important to note the Workgroup was not charged with modifying quality standards pertaining to TK, and as a result, this report does not focus on those standards.

California Preschool Quality Standards: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Equitable learning systems provide children access to resources, opportunities, and experiences that result in positive outcomes. They actively and continuously identify and intentionally eliminate manifestations of systemic racism and other forms of oppression.¹²⁸ Equitable high-quality preschool experiences and high-quality preschool programs support belonging and inclusion.¹²⁹

Current quality standards pursuant to *EC* Section 8203 and 5 *CCR* include several provisions that address issues related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, including those found in the following 5 *CCR* sections: Program Philosophy, Goals, and Objectives (§ 17701), Developmental Profile (§ 17702); Education Program (§ 17703), Staff Professional Development (§ 17704); and Nutrition (§ 17708).

¹²⁴ Sussman, Joshua, Hanna Melnick, Emily Newton, Kerry Kriener-Althen, Karen Draney, Peter Mangione, and Perman Gochyyev. 2022. “Preschool Quality and Child Development: How Are Learning Gains Related to Program Ratings?” Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/3742/download?inline&file=ECE_DRDP_Quality_REPORT.pdf.

¹²⁵ From fall to spring of the study year, compared with children in Tier 3 programs, children in Tier 4 programs gained an additional 1.2–1.7 months of learning and development, and those in Tier 5 programs gained an additional 2.2–2.5 months.

¹²⁶ Multilingual learners in Tier 5 programs gained an additional 2.6–2.8 months of learning and development compared with their peers in Tier 3 programs. The benefits associated with attending a higher-tier program were larger for multilingual learners than monolingual learners in each area of development. Children with disabilities in Tier 5 programs were projected to show 2.9–3.2 more months of learning and development than their peers in Tier 3 programs. Children with disabilities benefited more from attending a higher-quality program than children without disabilities in each area of development. Children from all racial and ethnic groups were projected to experience greater learning and development when attending Tier 4 and 5 programs, compared with Tier 3, although most differences were not statistically significant.

¹²⁷ This analysis was informed by the Trust for Learning Ideal Learning Environments. For more on ideal learning environments, including more specific detail on how well current quality standards found in *EC* Section 8203, see: Brooks, Gayl, and Roche. “California Title 5 Preschool Standards.”

¹²⁸ See appendix I for a more detailed definition of equity.

¹²⁹ Brooks, Gayl, and Roche. “California Title 5 Preschool Standards.”



California Preschool Quality Standards: Family and Community Engagement

The parents, guardians, caretakers, and kin of preschool children are their first and most important teachers. Current quality standards pursuant to *EC* Section 8203 and 5 *CCR* include considerable family and community engagement requirements for families of enrolled children. These include those found in the following 5 *CCR* sections: Family Engagement and Strengthening (§ 17705), Health and Social Services (§ 17706), Community Involvement (§ 17707), Program Self-Evaluation (§ 17709), and the Parent Survey (§ 17710).

California Preschool Quality Standards: Child-Centered Learning Environments

Current quality standards pursuant to *EC* Section 8203 and 5 *CCR* include modest attention to the child-centered learning concepts that research demonstrates matter for child outcomes, as described and cited throughout this report. These are found in the following 5 *CCR* sections: Definitions and Developmental Profile (§ 17700, § 17702), Education Program (§ 17703); Definitions and Environmental Rating Scales (§ 17700, § 17711); Staffing Ratios, Comingling of Age Ratios, Staffing Ratio Variance for Full-Day CSPP, and Volunteers for Part-day CSPP (§ 17713, § 17714, § 17715, § 17716); Health and Safety General Provisions, Visual Supervision, Restroom Facilities, Drinking Water (§ 17775, § 17776, § 17779, § 17780); and Indoor and Outdoor Space (§ 17777, § 17778). Additionally in California, children who are deaf or hard of hearing are required to have their language and literacy development assessed through selected tools, as authorized by Senate Bill 210.^{130,131}

California Preschool Quality Standards: Well-Prepared and Supported Educators

There are several existing quality standards that support the need for preschool educators to have the knowledge of child development and pedagogy to provide culturally affirming, linguistically responsive, and developmentally informed learning experiences referenced in *EC* Section 8203. These include provisions related to teacher, site supervisor, and program director qualifications and credentials. However, it is not clear that these provisions are adequate to ensure all preschool educators are well prepared or have the skills and knowledge they need to support

¹³⁰ See the California Department of Education website for more information on children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing at: California Department of Education. 2023. Deaf Education. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ss/dh>.

¹³¹ Senate Bill 210 was an act to add Section 56326.5 to the *Education Code*. Per *EC* Section 56326.5, the CDE Deaf and Hard of Hearing unit and the California School for the Deaf “shall jointly select existing tools or assessments for educators that can be used to assess the language and literacy development for deaf and hard of hearing children, regardless of placement.”

These educator tools or assessments: (1) Shall be in a format that shows stages of language development; (2) Shall be selected for use by educators to track the development of deaf and hard of hearing children’s expressive and receptive language acquisition and developmental stages toward English literacy; (3) Shall be selected from existing instruments or assessments used to assess the development of all children from birth to five years of age, inclusive; (4) Shall be appropriate, in both content and administration, for use with deaf and hard of hearing children; and (5) May be used, in addition to the assessment required by federal law, by the child’s IFSP or IEP team, as applicable, to track deaf and hard of hearing children’s progress, and to establish or modify IFSP or IEP plans.

the racial and linguistic diversity of California’s preschoolers, including multilingual learners and children with disabilities, and to address bias and racism more robustly in areas such as preventing exclusionary practices such as suspension and expulsion. Although California has Early Childhood Educator Competencies, current quality standards pursuant to EC Section 8203 and 5 CCR have a limited focus on ongoing educator development and program evaluation as mechanisms to drive quality improvement and improved child outcomes.¹³² Staff preparation standards can be found in the following 5 CCR sections: Definitions (§ 17700), Staff Development (§ 17704), Program Self-Evaluation Process (§ 17709), Teacher Qualifications (§ 17717), Site Supervisor Qualifications (§ 17718), Waiver of Qualifications for Site Supervisor; Conditions (§ 17719), Program Director Qualifications (§ 17720), and Waiver of Qualifications for Program Director; Conditions (§ 17721).

Preschool Access in California¹³³

Access to preschool across the mixed-delivery system, including through publicly subsidized and private (tuition paid by families) preschool programs is limited. However, access is expanding with investments in state-subsidized preschool programs and the movement toward universal access to TK. In 2021, there were a total of 939,350 children ages three and four in California. There were 512,990 licensed spaces for children ages two to five in child care centers and 267,902 spaces in family child care homes for children from birth to age twelve. Only a portion of these spaces offer preschool programs that are required to meet the program quality standards that are within the scope of this Workgroup.¹³⁴ After accounting for 75,465 TK students in 2021–22, there were still not nearly enough spaces for the state’s three- and four-year-old children.¹³⁵

While there exists a deficit of preschool spaces, the Workgroup contends that access is more than just an available slot in any program setting. Equitable access requires an available and affordable slot in a preschool program offering a high-quality early learning experience that is culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming; is designed to meet families’ needs for care; is geographically accessible; and likely to result in positive child development and school readiness outcomes. The Workgroup used a four-part framework to understand the landscape of preschool access and guide recommendations to increase access. The framework components include cost, reasonable effort (information and location), meeting families’ needs, and supporting child development.¹³⁶

Looking first at cost, many families are not in a financial position to pay preschool tuition, and most of these families qualify for state or federally subsidized programs. In 2021–22, 62 percent of three- and four-year-olds were eligible for CSPP. Of the state’s 498,416 three-year-olds, 303,603 were CSPP-eligible and 194,813 were not; of the state’s 507,294 four-year-olds, 316,917 were CSPP-eligible and 190,377 were not.¹³⁷ Of those eligible, only 8.5 percent of eligible three-year-olds (25,921 children) and 22 percent of eligible four-year-olds (65,980 children) were served. An additional 19,017 three-year-olds and 18,820 four-year-olds were served in Head Start programs. Assuming that Head Start participants were also CSPP-eligible, the total number of income-eligible children served in CSPP and Head Start was 129,738 (20.9 percent)—44,938 three-year-olds (15 percent of eligible) and 84,800 four-year-olds

¹³² The California Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Competencies describe the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that early childhood educators need in order to provide high-quality care and education to young children and their families. The California ECE Competencies are organized into twelve overlapping areas: (1) Child Development and Learning; (2) Culture, Diversity and Equity; (3) Relationships, Interactions, and Guidance; (4) Family and Community Engagement; (5) Dual-Language Development; (6) Observation, Screening, Assessment, and Documentation; (7) Special Needs and Inclusion; (8) Learning Environments and Curriculum; (9) Health, Safety, and Nutrition; (10) Leadership in Early Childhood Education; (11) Professionalism; and (12) Administration and Supervision. For more information, see: California Department of Education. 2023. California Early Childhood Educator Competencies. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/ececomps.asp>.

¹³³ In accordance with the scope and charge of the Workgroup, this section of the report examines access to preschool programs that follow 5 CCR education standards (CSPP and TK) or Head Start standards.

¹³⁴ Data from local child care R&Rs and compiled by the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network. See: California Child Care Resource & Referral Network. 2021. *2021 California Child Care Portfolio*. San Francisco, CA: California Child Care Resource and Referral Network. <https://rrnetwork.org/assets/general-files/4.05-California-portfolio.pdf>.

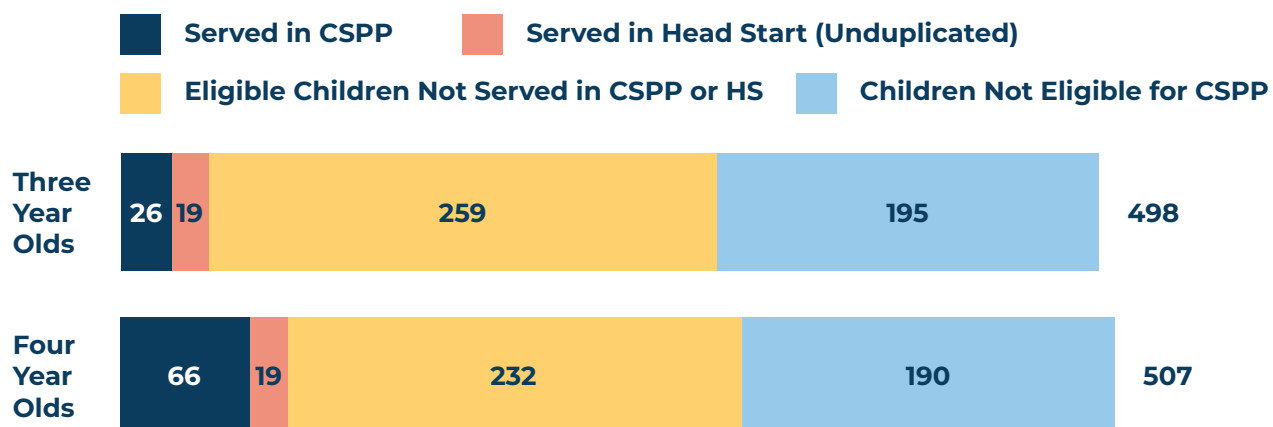
¹³⁵ California Department of Education. 2023. “California Department of Education (CDE) PreKindergarten Fact Sheet February 2023.” Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/BE/ag/ag/yr23/documents/jan23item10a1.docx>.

¹³⁶ The framework was presented by Child Trends in March 2023. For further descriptions of the framework see: Child Trends. 2023. “Identifying Families’ Needs and Preferences and Their Barriers to Accessing Preschool.” Memo developed for the March UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup: 2. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AarSRct7D5qd3Y9RqsDMEWupO2IFQCeT/view>.

¹³⁷ California Department of Education, “PreKindergarten Fact Sheet February 2023.”

(27 percent of eligible).¹³⁸ This leaves 258,665 three-year-olds and 232,117 four-year-olds who were eligible for CSPP but not served in CSPP or Head Start programs.¹³⁹ Figure 1 shows the numbers of three- and four-year-olds served in CSPP, served in Head Start, not served in either Head Start or CSPP, and children not eligible for CSPP. Head Start numbers provided are estimated numbers unduplicated from CSPP, meaning they exclude any CSPP and Head Start dual enrollments.

Figure 1: Number (in thousands) of Three- and Four-Year-Olds Served and Not Served in CSPP and Head Start, 2021–2022¹⁴⁰



As part of the public education system, TK is free for age-eligible children, providing an additional option for families who are not able to pay preschool tuition. In contrast to CSPP, eligibility for TK is not based on family income or need, but solely on child age. TK eligibility is expanding over time such that all four-year-olds will be eligible by the 2025–26 school year. In 2021–22, of the 121,500 eligible children, 75,465 (62 percent) participated in TK, 43,052 of whom were identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged.¹⁴¹ Estimates from the Learning Policy Institute indicate that by 2025–26, the year of universal TK eligibility for all four-year-olds, of California’s projected 447,700 four-year-olds, between 291,000 and 358,200 (65 to 80 percent of all four-year-olds) will participate in TK.

Additional three- and four-year-old children are served through other state-subsidized programs and tuition-based programs. These programs are not required to meet or be monitored on the program quality standards established by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction in 5 CCR pursuant to EC Section 8203. Some of these programs are required to meet similar program quality and education standards per sections 10208, 10209, and 10209.5 of the *Welfare and Institutions Code*, and to administer the Desired Results Developmental Profile assessment and use the PTKLF.¹⁴² Other programs may meet these standards despite no requirements to do so. Therefore, these programs help to provide additional access to high-quality preschool experiences across the state. However, there are not enough programs to meet the needs of all PreK-age children across the state at a cost that is accessible to all families.

¹³⁸ California Department of Education, “PreKindergarten Fact Sheet February 2023.” It is possible that additional CSPP-eligible children participated in TK.

¹³⁹ California Department of Education, “PreKindergarten Fact Sheet February 2023.”

¹⁴⁰ California Department of Education, “PreKindergarten Fact Sheet February 2023.”

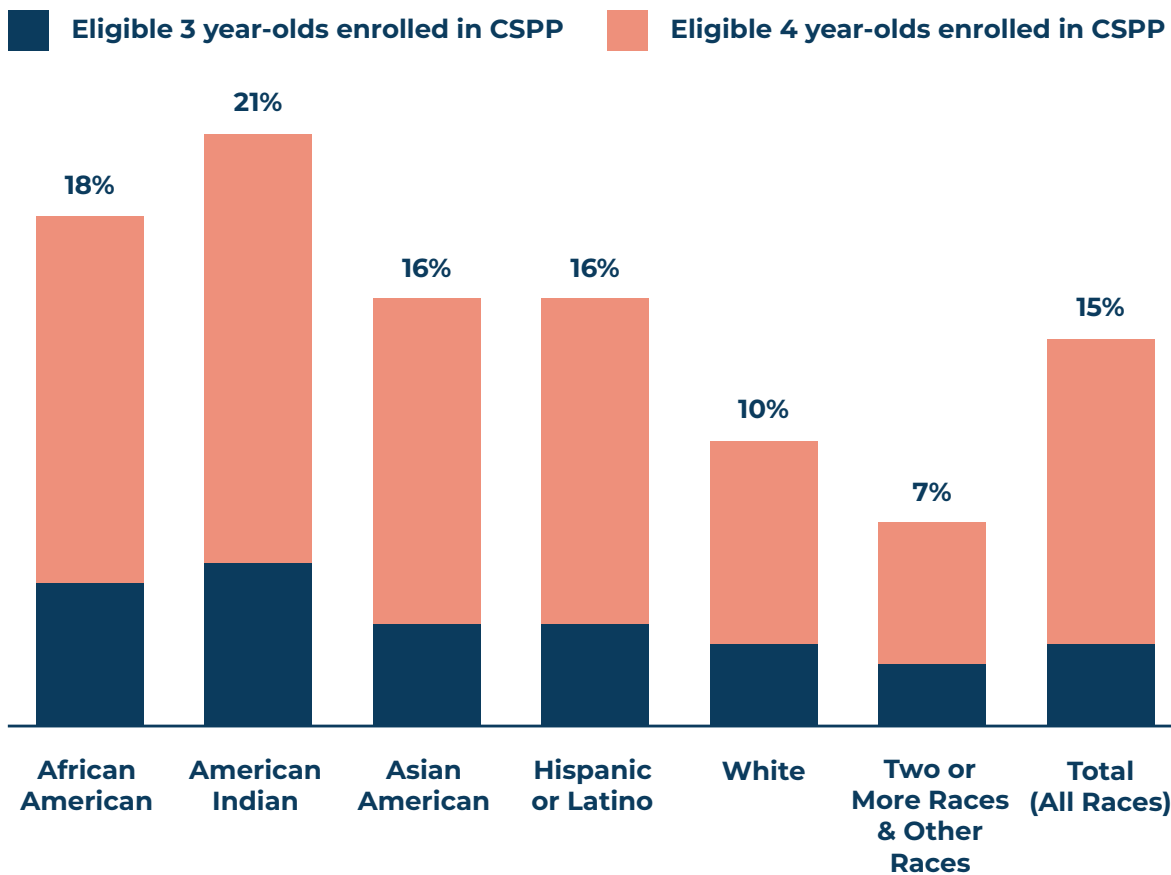
¹⁴¹ California Department of Education, “PreKindergarten Fact Sheet February 2023.”; Melnick, Hanna, Emma García, and Melanie Leung-Gagné. 2022. “Building a Well-Qualified Transitional Kindergarten Workforce in California: Needs and Opportunities.” Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/3724/download?inline&file=California_Transitional_Kindergarten_Workforce_REPORT.pdf.

¹⁴² These programs include the General Child Care Program (CCTR), the Severely Handicapped Program (CHAN), and the Family Child Care Education Home Networks (CFCC) Program. The expected timeline for publication of the PTKLF is 2024.

The estimated number and percentage of children unserved by preschool programs evidenced the need for the Workgroup to not only focus on preschool program quality, but to make recommendations on ways to increase access to high-quality learning experiences.

It is also critical to view eligibility and enrollment by race and other demographic factors. CSPP enrollment in October 2021 was 72 percent Hispanic or Latino, 12 percent White, 8 percent Asian, 7 percent African American, 2 percent Two or more Races or Others, and less than 1 percent American Indian.¹⁴³ The relative representation of races in CSPP is similar to the representation of each race in the population of three- and four-year olds in California. As figure 2 shows, among all CSPP-eligible three- and four-year-olds in 2021, 15 percent were enrolled in CSPP. The rate of enrollment by race among eligible children, however, varies considerably: 21 percent of all eligible American Indian children were enrolled, 18 percent of all eligible African American children were enrolled, 16 percent of all eligible Asian children were enrolled, 16 percent of all eligible Hispanic or Latino children were enrolled, and 10 percent of all eligible White children were enrolled, and 7 percent of all eligible children who are Two or More Races or Others were enrolled.¹⁴⁴

Figure 2: Rates of CSPP Enrollment Among Eligible Three- and Four-Year-Olds, by Race, 2021–2022¹⁴⁵



Additionally, some CSPP-eligible children are served in Head Start programs. In the 2021 program year, Head Start enrollment (including Migrant Head Start and American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start) in California was 76 percent Hispanic or Latino, 7 percent African American, 7 percent White, 6 percent Asian, 3 percent Two or More Races and Others, and 1 percent American Indian or Alaska Native.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Child Development Information Management System (CDMIS) 801A data for October 2021.

¹⁴⁴ American Community Survey (ACS) 2019 with 2021–22 eligibility thresholds and CDMIS 801A data for October 2021.

¹⁴⁵ American Community Survey (ACS) 2019 with 2021–22 eligibility thresholds and CDMIS 801A data for October 2021.

¹⁴⁶ Office of Head Start. 2022. Program Information Report (PIR). Enrollment Statistics Report for Program Year 2021 for Head Start, Migrant HS, AIAN HS in California. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/data-ongoing-monitoring/article/program-information-report-pir>.

TK enrollment of four-year-olds in Fall 2021 was 57 percent Hispanic or Latino, 20 percent White, 9 percent Asian, 9 percent Two or More Races or Others, 4 percent African American, and less than 1 percent American Indian. While 60 percent of TK-eligible four-year-olds were enrolled in TK in 2021, these rates of enrollment varied by race: 97 percent of TK-eligible American Indian children were enrolled, 87 percent of TK-eligible children who are Two or More races and Others were enrolled, 64 percent of TK-eligible Hispanic or Latino children were enrolled, 54 percent of TK-eligible African American children were enrolled, 64 percent of TK-eligible Asian children were enrolled, and 48 percent of TK-eligible White children were enrolled.^{147,148}

Research further suggests that access to quality preschool programs may be limited to certain groups of children. A recent local study investigated the relationship between QCC rating tiers and children’s learning and development outcomes, finding that “preschool children who are Black or African American, Multiracial, or Latino/a were underrepresented in higher-quality programs.”¹⁴⁹ The study found that Black or African American children were more likely to be in mid-quality (Tier 3) programs and less likely to be in highest-quality (Tier 5) programs than children from any other racial or ethnic group.¹⁵⁰ As noted in an earlier section of this report, the study also showed that multilingual learners, children with disabilities, and children from all racial or ethnic groups exhibited more learning and development gains in higher-tier programs. Researchers cautioned that “the systematic underrepresentation of certain children of color in higher-quality programs is a significant equity concern.”¹⁵¹

Location also affects children’s and families’ access to preschool, disproportionately impacting children in certain areas of the state. Research conducted for the Workgroup by the Berkeley Children’s Forum found high concentrations of three- and four-year-old children in the Central Valley and parts of the Inland Empire and Far North who were not enrolled in UPK programs in 2021. These concentrations of unenrolled children may reflect both UPK capacity issues (e.g., lack of CSPP programs for families to choose or limited spaces in existing programs) in rural communities and regions, as well as the barriers that families may face (or preferences they hold) regarding preschool access and enrollment.

Children with disabilities also face disproportionate access issues. Findings from a recent study from the Center for American Progress found that, compared with parents of nondisabled children, a larger proportion of parents with disabled children experience at least some difficulty finding child care and preschool services and that, compared with parents of nondisabled children, parents of young children with disabilities are three times more likely to experience job disruptions because of problems with child care.¹⁵² This is particularly troubling considering the importance of high-quality preschool services as an early intervention strategy for children with disabilities.



¹⁴⁷ California Department of Education. Data Quest. Enrollment Data 2021–22, TK Participation by Ethnicity and California Department of Finance Total Population by Individual Age.

¹⁴⁸ California Department of Education Office of Head Start, “Program Information Report.”

¹⁴⁹ Sussman et al., “Preschool Quality and Child Development.”

¹⁵⁰ Tiers refer to the levels of quality, as defined by QCC.

¹⁵¹ Sussman et al., “Preschool Quality and Child Development.”

¹⁵² Novoa, Christina. 2020. “The Childcare Crisis Disproportionately Affects Children with Disabilities.” Washington DC: Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/08/Child-Care-for-Children-with-Disabilites2.pdf>.

Access to special education services for eligible children is federally mandated and governed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The CDE works to support districts to provide these services to children while also implementing state statutes, regulations, and other policies that are state-imposed and are not required by IDEA.¹⁵³ After the need for assessment has been identified, a child is evaluated and the IEP team reviews assessment results to ascertain whether a child is determined to have a disability, need for specialized instruction, and is eligible for special education and related services.^{154,155} If a child is eligible for services, the IEP team develops an IEP that indicates, among several requirements, the services and supports that will be provided to the child within their least restrictive environment. IDEA emphasizes the importance of providing these services in the “least restrictive environment” appropriate for the child, including considering the setting where the child already receives general education preschool services.¹⁵⁶ As a member of the IEP team, parents have the right to participate in the development of the IEP and be informed of the available program options. Parents also have the right to refuse the placement and services indicated by the IEP.

Special education data from the CDE indicate that, in 2021–22, 49 percent of preschoolers with disabilities attended a special education class or program and received the majority of special education and related services there, 19 percent attended a regular early childhood education program and received the majority of special education and related services in a regular preschool program, 24 percent received special education and related services at a service provider location or other location than their regular early childhood program, and 8 percent received special education and related services at home.¹⁵⁷ In 2021, 4.3 percent of children enrolled in CSPP (3,975 children) had IEPs; this increased to 5.6 percent (5,564 children) in 2022.¹⁵⁸ Overall, California has a relatively low percentage of children ages three to five who have IEPs served in an inclusive early childhood program¹⁵⁹ (2.98 percent) compared to some other large states including Illinois (5.08 percent), New York (5.93 percent), and Pennsylvania (6.62 percent).¹⁶⁰

Taken together, these data suggest the need for the Workgroup to not only focus on increasing access generally, but to also focus on increasing access to inclusive high-quality preschool experiences for children with disabilities.

¹⁵³ California Department of Education. “State Administration, 2021.” <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/stateadminlst21.asp>.

¹⁵⁴ Per EC Section 56441.11, a preschool-age child, between the ages of three and five years, qualifies as needing special education services if they are identified as having one of the disabling conditions enumerated in law, needs specially designed instruction or services, has needs that cannot be met with modification of a regular environment in the home or school, or both without ongoing monitoring or support as determined by the IEP team, and meet eligibility criteria.

¹⁵⁵ Per EC Section 56341, the education program team shall include all of the following:

1. One or both of the child’s parents, a representative selected by a parent, or both, in accordance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Act 20 U.S.C. Sec. 1400 et seq.).
2. Not less than one regular education teacher of the pupil, if the pupil is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment. If more than one regular education teacher is providing instructional services to the individual with exceptional needs, one regular education teacher may be designated by the LEA to represent the others.
3. Not less than one special education teacher of the pupil, or if appropriate, not less than one special education provider of the pupil.
4. A representative of the LEA who meets all of the following:
 - a. Is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of individuals with exceptional needs.
 - b. Is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum.
 - c. Is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the LEA.
5. An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of the assessment results.
6. At the discretion of the parent, guardian, or the LEA, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the pupil, including related services personnel, as appropriate.
7. Whenever appropriate, the individual with exceptional needs.

¹⁵⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education. 2015. “Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs.” <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/earlylearning/joint-statement-full-text.pdf>.

¹⁵⁷ U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs. 2023. IDEA Section 618 Data Products: Static Tables Part B Child Count & Educational Environments Table 12. <https://data.ed.gov/dataset/idea-section-618-data-products-static-tables-part-b-count-envIRON-tables12/resources>.

¹⁵⁸ U.S. Department of Education, “IDEA Section 618 Data Products.”

¹⁵⁹ A high-quality inclusive learning environment for preschool children necessitates considering their individual learning needs, acknowledging that what constitutes an inclusive learning environment may differ as children have varying needs.

¹⁶⁰ U.S. Department of Education, “IDEA Section 618 Data Products.”

Barriers to Preschool Quality and Access That Impact Equity in California

Preschool quality, access, and equity issues are affected by state and local investments, and by barriers programs face in meeting program standards and expanding to serve more children. These barriers have an impact on children, families, preschool educators, and preschool programs in myriad and inequitable ways.

Barriers to preschool program quality improvement in California include:

- **Reimbursements and costs to programs**, wherein reimbursement rates do not compensate programs for the true cost of meeting current quality program standards or allow them to recruit and retain a stable, linguistically and culturally diverse, and qualified preschool workforce. This creates pay disparities and overall financial and staffing insecurity.
- **Systems alignment, coordination challenges, and complexity**, including inconsistent standards across different programs in California’s early learning landscape, contracting challenges and administrative burdens with state and federal agencies, limited access for FCCH providers to join FCCHENs, changes to the preschool landscape as California moves toward full implementation of universal TK, and overarching levels of complexity that make it difficult to administer preschool programs with high-quality standards.
- **Workforce and career pathway barriers**, including limited access to workforce preparation programs and professional learning for prospective and current preschool educators, difficult to navigate permitting and credentialing structures for prospective and current preschool educators, and costs associated with achieving advanced levels of preparation and education. This is coupled with low wages that keep many early educators in poverty and impede advancement, recruitment, and retention of educators in high-quality preschool programs.¹⁶¹ These challenges impact educators differently depending on the type of program or setting in which an educator works.
- **Space, capacity, and facilities barriers**, including high rents and mortgages, limited space in community- and school-based settings, proximity of programs in rural settings, the existence of or ability of programs to expand in high-need areas, and possession of adequate space and equipment to serve children with disabilities.

Families also face barriers that contribute to inequitable preschool access:

- **Eligibility and cost to families**, including costs for families to access high-quality preschools such as tuition, family fees, or out-of-pocket costs associated with transportation or extended child care outside of the preschool program, and complex eligibility rules and misconceptions or limited information about eligibility. TK, once fully implemented, will provide a free universal option for all four-year-olds. Additionally, family fee reform has made progress in addressing this for barrier families.¹⁶²
- **Limited communication and information sharing** can impede families’ understanding of quality and access, including rampant education jargon that families do not understand, lack of informational materials translated in languages other than English; lack of a “one-stop-shop” where families can get all the information they need; and limited information on universal TK eligibility, phased-in implementation, and enrollment procedures. These issues may also result from programs lacking multilingual educators or administrative staff.
- Experiences related to **prejudice, bias, racism, ableism, and oppression** can result in a lack of trust, and may impact a family’s desire to enroll their child in a preschool program or a family’s ability to maintain enrollment after suspension. These experiences can include a potential lack of language access, disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline practices, limited inclusion for children with disabilities, a lack of preschool educators with a shared identity and culture, or a lack of identity-affirming practices.

¹⁶¹ McLean, Caitlin, Lea J.E. Austin, Marcy Whitebook, and Krista L. Olson. 2021. Early Childhood Workforce Index - 2020. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/report-pdf>.

¹⁶² The 2022-23 California State Budget reformed family fees, eliminating family fees for everyone with monthly incomes under 75 percent of the state median income enrolled in publicly funded child care. This has greatly reduced the number of families that pay family fees. See: California Department of Education. 2022. “Management Bulletin 22-07.” <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ci/mb2207.asp>.

- **Issues around the preschool program’s length of day and length of year** can limit family access by creating too many transitions for children and additional costs for care during non-preschool program hours or may prevent access entirely for families that work nontraditional hours.
- **Issues related to geography**, as preschool programs may be located in areas that are not convenient for families to access or there may be insufficient access in areas that are convenient for families. This is particularly problematic in rural areas of California. For instance, there may not be sufficient programs that are proximate to where families live or work or that offer program hours aligned with the commuting needs of families. Furthermore, parents may face trade-offs related to quality and geography. For instance, a family may prefer to enroll their child in a home-based CSPP but may need to make a different enrollment selection if there are no home-based CSPPs near their home or workplace.
- **Limited access to special education services** in a setting that meets child and family needs. Because the responsibility for offering special education and related services falls to school districts, most districts will offer these services in school-based programs or at central office locations. The location of the special education and related services can make it difficult for some families to access IEP and Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) services in community- or home-based settings. As a result, children either need to be transported off-site to receive special education and related services, or they need to be enrolled in a school-based program to access services, which can limit authentic access to all program types for children with disabilities. In some instances, a family may decline special education and related services outlined in an IEP to keep their child in their preferred preschool setting or may not be able to make a choice for a part-day program due to work or other life restrictions.¹⁶³

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¹⁶³ Workgroup members reflected on this topic during the June 22, 2023 UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup meeting.

II. Recommendations

This section of the report presents recommendations to the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature and the Department of Finance, in accordance with the requirements of *EC* Section 8202.6. Recommendations were developed in consultation with the Workgroup; state partners, including CDSS, SBE, and CTC; and members of the public.

Recommendations are presented through the following organizational structure:

- **Recommendations for Preschool Quality Standards:** Specific proposed changes or additions to 5 *CCR* associated with *EC* Section 8203.
- **Recommendations for Preschool Access:** Recommendations on increasing access to high-quality universal preschool programs for three- and four-year-old children offered through a mixed-delivery model.
- **Recommendations for Both Quality and Access:** Recommendations that pertain to both increasing quality and access, and reflect the interconnected nature of these issues.
- **Other Considerations:** Approaches for increasing access to high-quality preschool through a mixed-delivery system that will require additional funding and should be prioritized as funding becomes available.

Unless otherwise stated, recommendations can be acted upon by the CDE through the regulatory process, through administrative changes, and by building on the progress made by the Workgroup and through the materials developed by experts that contributed to the Workgroup and to the overall scope of the report.¹⁶⁴ Implementation of these recommendations will require time as the CDE looks for possible opportunities to integrate these recommendations into existing work. Implementation of these recommendations could be accelerated if prioritized and funded by the Legislature. Philanthropic or other partners could also work with the CDE to accelerate or enhance action on specific recommendations.

II.A System Acknowledgments

There are several critical system drivers of quality and access to preschool programs that fall outside of the scope of this report that are being addressed in other venues:

- **Rate reform for program and provider reimbursement rates.** California has embarked on a new process for setting reimbursement rates for early care and education programs that receive state funding, including CSPP. Any outcomes from the rate reform process will have implications for the expansion of access to high-quality preschool by changing the economics of operating different types of programs.
- **Implementation of TK.** TK is funded by Proposition 98 General Fund apportionments based on Average Daily Attendance (ADA) to LEAs as part of their student grade-based funding. TK is subject to standards outlined in *EC* sections 48000, 48000.1, and 48000.15. *EC* Section 48000 states that it is the intent of the Legislature that TK be aligned to the PTKLF developed by the department. In California, most school and district administration matters are left to local control. The Workgroup was not charged with recommending changes to quality standards for TK, but was charged with recommending ways to increase access to educational preschool programs that include TK. As such, this report makes recommendations about the implementation of the PTKLF and aligned program quality standards, which TK programs are encouraged to use, but does not recommend changes to other TK-specific standards.

¹⁶⁴ Materials developed in service of the Workgroup scope and charge will continue to be noticed publicly and be posted on the Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup site on California Educators Together website: <https://www.caeducatorstogether.org/groups/bzsgmy7y/upk-mixed-delivery-quality-and-access-workgroup>.

- **Revisions to the Child Development Permit.** Specific changes to the content or structure of the Child Development Permit will be addressed by the CTC in consultation with the Child Development Permit Workgroup and in alignment with the Master Plan. The CTC seeks to ensure integrity, relevance, and high quality in the preparation, certification, and discipline of preschool educators who serve California’s young learners.
- **Updates to the PTKLF and Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP).** There is ongoing work as part of a \$10 million investment to update the learning foundations and corresponding assessment. It is important to note that TK programs have local control over assessment tools and are not required to administer the DRDP. Furthermore, *EC 48000* defines TK as “the first year of a two-year kindergarten program that uses a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate.” While no state curriculum is mandated, pursuant to *EC 48000(f)*, it is the intent of the legislature that TK programs use both the kindergarten standards and the PTKLF developed by the CDE.
- **Changes to the CDE CSPP Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Block Grant and Quality Counts California (QCC).** There are changes underway related to both the CSPP QRIS Block Grant, administered by the CDE, and to the broader QCC system, which has been a state and local partnership of CDE, CDSS, First 5 California, and local consortia. Importantly, the CSPP QRIS Block Grant, administered by the CDE, is the only part of QCC that is in statute and requires a rating and use of a rating matrix, whereas the CDSS is required to administer the QRIS as written in the CCDBG state plan. The CDSS writes and submits the state plan to the federal Administration for Children and Families every three years and can amend the plan in the interim.

The CDE is transforming the CSPP QRIS Block grant to support a quality recognition and support system for UPK. This will address required quality program requirements, such as inclusive practices; responsive interactions; use of CLASS as a classroom quality measure; addressing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging; and effectively using the PTKLF and the DRDP to inform curriculum rather than high-stakes ratings for accountability. The Block Grant will be focused on CSPP provided by mixed-delivery partners with intentional connections to TK, Head Start, and Expanded Learning Opportunities Programs. These changes to the CSPP QRIS Block Grant are under way with attention to equity and continuous quality improvement in response to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, changes in available funding, the mandated transition of quality projects funded through the Child Care and Development Fund from CDE to CDSS, and pending reductions in investments to the broader QCC system as First 5 California makes its final investment in its Improve and Maximize Programs so All Children Thrive (IMPACT) Legacy funding.¹⁶⁵ The CDE will complete the redesign work in 2024 and work to clearly communicate the changes through diverse and extensive communications strategies, including engagement with key interest holders. The new standards and support structures will be fully implemented beginning in July 2025.

Additional changes to California’s QCC QRIS will impact the state’s early learning and care system and are dependent on how CDSS and First 5 California decide to incorporate and implement a rating system moving forward. Changes include creating additional pathways to participation so all early care and education providers can benefit from quality improvement supports. Changes are meant to be inclusive of California’s mixed-delivery system in order for all programs and providers to benefit. This will require intentional efforts to create a system that is simplified and aligned for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, as outlined in the Master Plan.

While these areas fall outside of the recommendations outlined in this report, it is important to acknowledge the interdependencies that exist between these and some of the recommendations found in this report. In some of the recommendations presented in the sections that follow, these efforts are directly referenced to acknowledge the ongoing work and articulate important connections or dependencies.

It is also important to acknowledge that the scope of this report is specific to UPK; however, many of the recommendations could be applied towards strengthening California’s child care system more generally.

¹⁶⁵ First 5 California. 2022. “Improve and Maximize Programs so All Children Thrive Legacy.” <https://www.ccfc.ca.gov/pdf/commission/meetings/handouts/Commission-Handouts-2022-10-27/Item-8-Improve-and-Maximize-Programs-so-All-Children-Thrive-Legacy.pdf>.

II.B Preschool Quality Standards Recommendations

This section of the report contains recommendations pertaining to the Workgroup’s charge, as outlined in *EC* Section 8202.6, to “provide recommendations to update preschool standards pursuant to *EC* Section 8203.” *EC* Section 8203 states that “The Superintendent shall develop standards for the implementation of high-quality preschool programs.” The recommendations here include specific proposed changes or additions to 5 *CCR* associated with *EC* Section 8203, along with implementation considerations and administrative changes for the CDE as part of the proposed regulatory changes.¹⁶⁶ In some cases, the recommended changes to regulations clarify or specify best practices that are already in place in many programs. This specificity is needed, however, to ensure that all programs understand and implement these practices.

Note: An administrative change is a change in the way CDE conducts its business, for example through providing additional resources or support. These changes are changes in practice and do not require additional legal authority to implement.

The changes recommended in this section would apply to all programs required to meet preschool standards pursuant to *EC* Section 8203, including home-based CSPPs operated through a FCCHEN.

Overarching Quality Regulations

Associated Regulation: 5 *CCR* 17700. Definitions

Proposed Changes to Regulations:

- A. Include definitions of the following terms: “Comprehensive learning approach,” “Curriculum,” “Instructional materials,” and “Preschool and Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF).” (See also 5 *CCR* sections 17702, Developmental Profile and 17703, Education Program).

Implementation and Administration Considerations:

- Develop and implement these recommendations with the following considerations:
 - The definition of curriculum should include a focus on both a whole-child approach with meaningful units of study connected to children’s experiences and community, and specific attention to math, science, language development, and literacy instruction. This definition could also be informed by the upcoming report from the National Academy of Science, Engineering, and Math on “A New Vision for High-Quality Pre-K Curriculum.”¹⁶⁷
 - The definition of a comprehensive learning approach should reference a holistic model that includes use of a curriculum aligned with the PTKLF, supportive learning materials, and aligned professional development that supports children’s optimal growth and development.
 - The definition of instructional materials should reference materials that are developmentally appropriate; inclusive and accessible; safe; culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming; and supportive of playful learning and implementation of selected curricula.

¹⁶⁶ The Workgroup can recommend changes, best practices, or guidance and highlight opportunities for different systems to offer aligned experiences, but local control of TK and federal implementation of Head Start must be acknowledged. Support for alignment with Head Start and TK can be achieved in many cases, by revising Division 1, Chapter 18.5 of 5 *CCR* for CSPP to match (when TK or Head Start is higher). As such, and per the legislative scope, the Workgroup’s recommendations and work should focus on quality standards in *EC* Section 8203. For current 5 *CCR* regulations associated with *EC* Section 8203, see: UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup. 2023. “Title 5 Quality Regs with Summaries.”

¹⁶⁷ For more information, see: National Academies. 2023. “A New Vision for High Quality Pre-K Curriculum.” <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/a-new-vision-for-high-quality-pre-k-curriculum#sectionCommittee>.

Regulations Related to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Associated Regulation: 5 CCR 17701. Program Philosophy, Goals and Objectives

Proposed Changes to Regulations:

- B. Require preschool educators to be engaged in the development of the program philosophy, goals, and objectives to ensure the philosophy, goals, and objectives are informed by those working directly with children and responsive to the current issues facing preschool children, families, educators, and communities.
- C. Indicate that the program philosophy, goals, and objectives should support cultural and linguistic affirmation and multilingualism, and equitable child development and school readiness outcomes, regardless of children’s race or ethnicity.
- D. Indicate that the program philosophy, goals, and objectives should be revisited, at minimum, every five years to ensure they are still responsive to local needs.

Associated Regulation: Not Applicable

Proposed New Sections or Regulations:

- E. Create a new Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging section. This section would define Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging within the context of CSPP and the needs of California’s preschoolers. This section would also require programs to implement all standards with a focus on increasing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, including a specific attention to culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming practices and equitable child development and school readiness outcomes.¹⁶⁸ In addition, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging will continue to be referenced in other relevant sections.
- F. Review existing regulations and move or cross reference other relevant subsections that specifically support diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging to this new section (for example, requirements related to the Parent Language Information Survey).¹⁶⁹
- G. Add language to require programs to articulate an approach to guiding and promoting positive behavior that is culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming and focuses on the social–emotional development of children.

Implementation and Administration Considerations:

- Develop best practice recommendations to support programs in measuring program goals and objectives and ensuring that the program philosophy, goals, and objectives are used to inform professional learning and educator development at the program level.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ The purpose of a new section of regulation focused on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging is to ensure that program administrators pay specific attention to these issues across all aspects of program implementation. Current standards areas include attention to issues related to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging; however, developing a stand-alone standard will help elevate the importance of these issues more prominently in regulation.

¹⁶⁹ This report references issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in other sections of regulation to ensure these issues are adequately reflected.

¹⁷⁰ The term “best practice recommendations” is used in alignment with the language authorizing the Workgroup. Best practice recommendations will highlight methods or strategies that have been generally accepted as superior to known alternatives because they support environments, opportunities, or activities that are linked to better outcomes than those achieved by alternatives.

- Develop best practice recommendations and technical assistance to support programs to identify the demographics of children in their jurisdiction; to provide active outreach and support to those communities; and demonstrate efforts to hire educators and other staff that reflect the racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds of the children and families being served. To the extent feasible, provide common information in priority languages based on the families and communities that programs serve wherever possible (for example, eligibility information).
- Identify a framework for inclusion that focuses on serving children with disabilities in the same preschool programs and classrooms as their peers without disabilities; holding high expectations and intentionally promoting participation in all learning and social activities for children of all abilities and facilitated by the students’ individualized needs that are outlined in the students’ IEP; and using formative assessments and evidence-based teaching. Build on the Early Childhood Education (ECE) competency area for Special Needs and Inclusion to foster children’s holistic development (cognitive, language, communication, physical, behavioral, and social–emotional), relationships with peers, and their sense of belonging. Also build upon the work completed by the Impact Inclusion Workgroup.¹⁷¹ All settings serving children ages three to five years old will enroll children of all abilities.
- Encourage programs to review the federal *Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs*, which articulates a “commitment to ensure that each child’s individual needs are supported appropriately, that each family’s goals for their children are considered, and all have high expectations for each child. This tenet of quality applies to every child, including dual language learners, immigrants (regardless of documentation status), refugees, migrants, and those with special health care needs, living in poverty, experiencing homelessness, or in foster care.”¹⁷²
- Identify and promote resources that support educators to reflect on social justice issues, examine biases including racism and ableism, develop cultural competence, and consider how bias may impact their practice.

Regulations Related to Family Engagement

Associated Regulation: 5 CCR 17705. Family Engagement and Strengthening

Proposed Changes to Regulations:

- H. Add facilitating family connections and community building as a required component of family engagement and strengthening, building on the ECE competency area for family engagement.



¹⁷¹ Inclusion and inclusive practices for children with disabilities should consider their individual learning needs.

¹⁷² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, “Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs.”

Associated Regulation: 5 CCR 17710. Parent Survey

Proposed Changes to Regulations:

- I. Describe the intended goals of the parent survey and include a goal of exploring family satisfaction and perceptions of a welcoming environment, using a research-based survey of family engagement and belonging and more effectively measuring support for parent understanding of children’s learning and development. Incorporate the revised parent survey into regulations for program use and remove the references to the old parent survey.

Implementation and Administration Considerations:

- Offer technical assistance related to creating opportunities for families to engage and interact with others to build a support system in which they can share resources, help navigate challenges, and provide emotional support to each other (for example, through the parent cafe model funded by the Preschool Development Grant). This should include ways preschool programs can provide opportunities for parent input on programming and engagement and ways preschool programs that are co-located at a school serving elementary children can create connections with parent engagement and community building efforts at the school, to the extent possible. Opportunities offered should be culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming, as well as locally determined based on the unique needs of the community.
- Provide brief, best practice recommendations and, as feasible, resources in multiple languages for UPK programs to support the ongoing implementation of flexible and inclusive family engagement efforts, with attention to bidirectional relationships between families and educators to help children navigate and bridge home and preschool environments.
- Develop a revised parent survey that ensures the survey content and structure effectively solicits information about parent satisfaction and sense of belonging. To the extent possible, the survey should include questions specific to the experiences and satisfaction of families of multilingual learners, families from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds, and families across the income spectrum. The survey should also be reviewed to ensure questions are not overcomplicated and are easy to answer for families. The survey should be provided in multiple languages and include questions that assess:
 - Whether program staff and family engagement activities foster an inclusive; culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming; and welcoming environment free from bias, racism, and microaggressions.
 - Whether families have opportunities to suggest program improvements or additional family strategies or activities.
 - Why families selected the program.
 - Whether families feel that the program is effectively meeting the needs of multilingual learners in terms of language support, cultural sensitivity, and providing a welcoming environment.
 - Whether families feel the program is effectively meeting the needs of racially diverse children in terms of creating a sense of belonging and affirmation and providing a welcoming and emotionally safe environment.
 - Whether families feel that children with disabilities are adequately supported and included in the full range of program activities and instructional opportunities.



- Work with CDSS to explore opportunities to have common elements of a parent survey to ensure alignment in the experiences families have, while also recognizing the differences between programs and program standards.
- Explore the best mechanism for collecting these family survey results statewide and pursue regulatory changes if necessary. Begin to annually analyze parent survey data to determine areas for program improvement statewide, including an analysis of parent satisfaction disaggregated by enrollment demographics to better understand potential trends. Data should be assessed for geography and demographic disparities.
- Ensure those responsible for recommending revisions to the survey and analyzing data represent the diversity of California’s families and that they think critically about biases in survey analysis to reduce perpetuation of existing inequities and disparities across historically marginalized communities.
- Develop a toolkit to support parent understanding of formal complaint processes. Including the types of issues that may warrant a complaint, such as those related to experiences of racism, ableism, prejudice, and bias.

Regulations Related to Child-Centered Learning Environments

Associated Regulation: 5 CCR 17702. Developmental Profile

Proposed Changes to Regulations:

- J. Amend language to require teachers to use results from the DRDP to guide learning, inform instructional strategies, and design environments to support developmental progress for all children and to support progress toward IEP goals for children with an IEP.

Associated Regulation: 5 CCR 17703. Education Program

Proposed Changes to Regulations:

- K. Require programs to adopt an evidence-based curriculum that is aligned with the PTKLF and the DRDP and best supports the children they serve.
- L. Add language to indicate that, in addition to the program standards being culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming, programs should build connections to home and community and create a sense of belonging for children and families.
- M. Include support for home language in the list of ways programs must provide for the development of each child’s cognitive and language skills.
- N. Include enhancing connections to home and family as one of the ways programs must support children’s social and emotional development.
- O. Add language to ensure all programs schedules provide a balance of structure and flexibility with opportunities for a variety of play activities, including unstructured free-play and gross motor play, and an opportunity to nap or rest, as applicable.

Associated Regulation: 5 CCR 17713. Staffing Ratios for CSPP

Proposed Changes to Regulations:

- P. Specify a group size cap of 24. *To the extent that programs are not currently operating at this group size cap, such cap would need to be achieved within existing contract funds.*

Associated Regulation: Not Applicable

Proposed New Sections or Regulations:

- Q. Create a new section called Instructional Materials and Environment to Support Learning. This section would include language stipulating that children from all backgrounds and of all abilities shall have access to both indoor and outdoor learning environments including opportunities for napping and rest, and developmentally appropriate materials. This section should include language that emphasizes the role of the environment in facilitating nurturing, responsive, and engaging interactions between children and educators. This section should cross-reference regulations that require programs to implement all standards with a focus on increasing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, including a specific attention to culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming practices.

Implementation and Administration Considerations:

- Explore the appropriate considerations for ratios as they pertain to special education caseloads for preschool educators.
- Provide best practice recommendations and technical assistance, including communicating about existing free resources to support early educators to appropriately administer, score, and use the results from the DRDP to inform instruction. Best practice recommendations should include how to assess multilingual learners in a way that is mindful of their culture and language.
 - DRDP results should be used as a formative assessment, when possible, to inform language development planning for multilingual learners, including identifying language needs within a framework of multilingual development, and planning to support home language and English acquisition (but it should not be used as a screener for English Language Learner identification).
 - Coaching and technical assistance on the use of the DRDP should be provided on an ongoing basis.
- Continue to collaborate with CDSS to support alignment across CDE- and CDSS-administered programs to support the use of the DRDP tool across preschool programs. Continue to work with the SBE to support use of the DRDP in TK and address alignment into the early grades.
- Encourage the use of the DRDP and PTKLF in TK and Kindergarten classrooms to support P–3 alignment.
- Provide technical assistance on the use of and communication about the *Language Development Milestones* for deaf and hard of hearing preschoolers in UPK classrooms.
- Provide a list of curricula that meet the requirements of and ensure equitable access to high-quality approaches, including open-source options and options appropriate for FCCHs. Accompany this list with guidance on what programs should consider when selecting a curriculum and on how programs can work with families to select a curriculum that appropriately meets the needs of children, families, and communities.

- Ensure that all curricula included on the list have, or can be combined with other curricula to ensure they have, the following characteristics:
 - Are play-based; developmentally informed; culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming; and aligned to all domains outlined in the PTKLF.
 - Have intentional design with appropriate scope and sequence around the teaching of early math, science, language, and literacy skills (research demonstrates that intentionality in these areas in an otherwise whole-child curriculum is needed to optimize diverse children’s outcomes in these areas.
 - Have intentional design for embedding social–emotional learning across content areas and learning activities.
 - Are racially, culturally, and linguistically affirming, and supportive of the needs of multilingual learners and children from historically marginalized communities.
 - Are inclusive and supportive of children with disabilities.
 - Include curricula that is developed by curriculum and instruction experts who have cultural, linguistic, and racial expertise and diversity and curricula that has demonstrated, evidence-based impact for children of color.
 - Address all components of the Education Program regulations or could be combined with other curricula to address all components of the Education Program.
- Provide best practice recommendations for preschool educators and programs on how to:
 - Use the results of the DRDP to inform the ongoing implementation of curriculum.
 - Embed internal protocols and systems around the administration and use of the DRDP to minimize disruption and avoid gaps in the implementation of child observation due to staff turnover.
 - Use languages other than English in all preschool programs, including English-only preschool programs as a strategy to support home language development and multilingualism.¹⁷³
 - Intentionally support connections to home and family, which can improve children’s social–emotional development and home language development.
 - Intentionally support connections to student identity through the use of instructional materials that are culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming.
 - Address behaviors that may challenge adults, including repeated patterns of behaviors that significantly interfere with the learning of other children or interactions with peers and adults that are not responsive to the use of developmentally appropriate guidance.
 - Identify and document exclusionary or inequitable discipline practices, including patterns related to child and educator demographic characteristics, and implement changes to support equitable disciplinary practices that prioritize children’s social and emotional development and belonging.

Regulations Related to Program Monitoring, Administration, and Governance

Associated Regulation: 5 CCR 17709. Program Self-Evaluation Process

Proposed Changes to Regulations:

- R. As needed, modify section (c) to clarify how alternative self-evaluation reports required by other agencies can be submitted to the CDE and the process for reviewing such reports for monitoring purposes.

¹⁷³ Strategies include print-rich environments with words in the languages reflected in the program, books, and other materials in multiple languages, and engaging families in preschool activities.

Implementation and Administration Considerations:

- Develop an administrative process and criteria for programs to submit, and for CDE to accept and review, self-evaluation and monitoring reports required by other agencies (such as Head Start and QCC) as part of program self-evaluation with the goal of mitigating or reducing administrative burden.
- Design models for differentiated monitoring (such as risk-based monitoring) and program assessment for CSPPs that incorporate other existing program assessments, as applicable, (for example, those used in the CSPP QRIS Block Grant system or Head Start) to minimize the administrative burden on CSPP contractors and the State and to create a more aligned and coordinated system of quality improvement.
- Assess the need for other regulatory changes related to program monitoring for congruency with changes to program self-evaluation and differentiated monitoring, including the contract monitoring requirements in 5 CCR 17794.
- Ensure monitoring is attentive to children’s learning experiences; responsive interactions and instructional strategies; and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; and that monitoring does not perpetuate and exacerbate existing inequities and disparities across cultural groups (See *Intersectionality of Quality and Access* section for additional context).
- Ensure monitoring supports program-led continuous quality improvement efforts in addition to ensuring compliance and accountability.
- Support implementation of the CLASS Environment tool in order to maintain high-quality physical learning environments for children in all preschool settings.

Regulations Related to the Workforce

Associated Regulation: 5 CCR 17704. Staff Professional Development

Proposed Changes to Regulations:

- S. Include that staff professional learning should be aligned with the PTKLF, in addition to the DRDP, and assess the feasibility of a statutory change to the topics for paid staff professional development days, pursuant to *EC* Section 8251, to grant the CDE the authority to outline state priority areas that are responsive to current contexts.

Implementation and Administration Considerations:

- If a statutory change is made related to staff professional learning topics, consider maintaining and enhancing state priority areas for culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming staff professional development related to:
 - The science of learning and development.
 - Effective adult-child interactions aligned to the CLASS and CLASS Environment.
 - Conducting early education setting-based mental health assessments, such as the “Climate of Healthy Interactions for Learning & Development (CHILD)” or other appropriate instruments to support behavioral health and early childhood mental health.
 - Effective pedagogy for early language, literacy, and math skill development.
 - Inclusion of children with disabilities with their peers and use of evidence-based practices to support inclusive preschool experiences.
 - Universal Design for Learning.
 - Supporting home language and English language development for multilingual learners.

- Effective interactions focusing on equity, addressing bias reduction, supporting racially affirming program environments, and developing cultural competence, which could include use of ACSES.
 - Supporting children who engage in behaviors that challenge adults and supporting behavioral health.
 - Using fair and proactive discipline strategies designed to reduce bias in exclusionary discipline.
 - Promoting positive behaviors through proactive, intentional teaching and social–emotional support.
 - Curricula implementation (specific to curricula used in the program) and curriculum fidelity, including an emphasis on playful learning.
 - Using PTKLF and DRDP to inform instruction and understand children’s development and needs for support.
 - Conducting effective developmental screenings and using data from screenings to inform program practices.
 - Effective communication and family engagement strategies.
- Integrate the above topics where possible to ensure teachers see connections across teaching strategies to best support children.
 - Require FCCHEN contractors to provide optional staff professional learning opportunities for FCCHEN providers that are aligned with CSPP program quality standards (See *Intersectionality of Quality and Access* for additional context).

II.C Intersectionality of Quality and Access

This section includes recommendations to increase both quality of and access to high-quality preschool programs for three- and four-year-old children offered through a mixed-delivery model. These are low- or no-cost strategies at the intersection of quality and access that seek to increase both quality and access by:

- Increasing the number of high-quality preschool programs
- Improving quality improvement and communications infrastructure
- Cultivating belonging
- Using transparent and disaggregated data
- Supporting new administrators

Support Quality and Access by Increasing the Number of High-Quality Preschool Programs

- A. Establish pathways for prospective UPK programs to meet and regularly verify meeting preschool quality standards with a specific focus on increasing the number and capacity of programs, including FCCHENs, in areas with a lack of preschool services.
 - a. Offer technical assistance and targeted outreach in parts of the state where there are existing gaps, including for multilingual learners, children with disabilities, and children from historically marginalized backgrounds.
 - b. Analyze and modify the CSPP QRIS Block Grant, as appropriate, to support strong pathways for meeting and verifying standards.



- B.** Provide pathways for FCCHs to join FCCHENs.
 - a.** Provide best practice recommendations and technical assistance to current CSPP contract holders on how to offer services through a FCCHEN.
 - b.** Ensure CSPP contractors and applicants are aware of opportunities to apply for expansion funding, as it becomes available, and to provide services through a CSPP FCCHEN.
 - c.** Work with early learning and care infrastructure partners to communicate with FCCHs about opportunities to join a FCCHEN.¹⁷⁴
 - d.** Modify the CSPP QRIS Block Grant Request for Applications (RFA) to include a stronger focus on FCCHENs, pursuant to *EC 8203.1(h)*.
- C.** Provide best practice recommendations and technical assistance for high-quality preschool programs wishing to begin or expand dual language immersion programs.¹⁷⁵
 - a.** Ensure that the California English Learner (EL) Roadmap policy and guidance materials are shared with UPK programs and support development of additional guidance for implementing EL Roadmap strategies in UPK settings.
 - b.** Modify the CSPP QRIS Block Grant RFA to include a stronger focus on recognizing, supporting, or incentivizing dual language immersion programs.
- D.** Share information and encourage LEAs to utilize Title I, Part A funding to increase preschool quality and access, including by extending program hours, supporting inclusion, reducing adult-child ratios, establishing bilingual programs, augmenting educator wages, supporting educator preparation, and expanding educator professional development opportunities.¹⁷⁶

Support Quality and Access by Improving Quality Improvement and Communications Infrastructure

- E.** Implement changes to define and clarify a day of operation as inclusive of professional development days (up to the number of days specified by the CDE), through the most effective regulatory or statutory mechanism and encourage providers to utilize these days to support continuous quality improvement.
- F.** Update CSPP Program Quality Standards to clarify that the role of FCCHENs includes supporting CSPP programs in FCCHs by:
 - a.** Offering FCCH providers optional professional learning, growth, and career development opportunities that are aligned with recommended changes to *EC Section 8203*.
 - b.** Supporting optional opportunities for FCCH providers to earn units toward Child Development Permits.
 - c.** Providing optional business services to support the stability of FCCH providers.
- G.** Ensure CDE monitoring staff who work with FCCHENs are knowledgeable about the unique strengths and needs of FCCH providers.
- H.** Analyze the statutory roles of entities within local early learning and care infrastructure to identify potential changes needed to ensure coordinated and linguistically responsive outreach, training, and technical assistance for prospective and existing UPK programs.

¹⁷⁴ Early learning and care infrastructure refers to planning, referral, professional learning and development, and coordination of entities such as UPK Coordinators, County Offices of Education (COEs), R&Rs, alternative payment programs, and local child care planning councils (LPCs).

¹⁷⁵ Dual language immersion programs provide integrated language learning and academic instruction for native speakers of English and native speakers of another language, with the goals of high academic achievement, first and second language proficiency, and cross-cultural understanding.

¹⁷⁶ U.S. Department of Education. 2024. *Serving Preschool Children Through Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as Amended*. <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2024/02/Title-I-Preschool-Early-Learning-Guidance-Revised-2023-FINAL.pdf>.

- I. Develop a language justice plan to inform CDE communications efforts related to UPK quality and access. The plan should identify the languages most commonly spoken by families with young children for translation of communications materials.
- J. Continue to cultivate cross-sector collaboration, through the UPK Planning and Implementation Grant, local Universal PreKindergarten Mixed Delivery Planning grants, and in partnership with other early learning and care infrastructure and TK–12 partners to ensure that all guidance and resources related to preschool quality are shared across all early learning and TK programs.

Support Quality and Access by Cultivating Belonging

- K. Build capacity through training for CDE staff working with UPK programs on culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming practices, and practices that support belonging.
- L. Provide technical assistance and guidance on cultural and linguistic responsiveness and implicit bias for all UPK trainers, observers, coaches, and coordinators, and for FCCHEN administrators.
- M. Collaborate with Tribal CSPP, the Tribal Child Care Association of California, tribal child care programs funded by the federal Child Care and Development Fund, and Tribal Head Start programs, to learn from the unique strengths of these programs and to better understand the needs of tribal children. Share lessons learned from this collaboration to support quality and belonging for tribal children served across UPK programs.
- N. Celebrate multiculturalism and multilingualism by honoring the diversity of California preschool educators through annual recognition of Preschool Educators Appreciation Day each year on the third Friday of March.¹⁷⁷
- O. Explore waivers to address workforce criteria to better support Indigenous language revitalization and immersion programs so that all children can benefit from the knowledge, wisdom, and culture embedded in tribal languages.
- P. Provide best practice recommendations related to supporting age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate foods and meal service options, including approaches to family style meals, ensuring adequate time for children to eat, encouraging children to explore new foods, offering fresh minimally processed menu items, and connecting meals to learning opportunities.



¹⁷⁷ This is the date that National Preschool Teachers Appreciation Day is celebrated.

Support Quality and Access Through Transparent and Disaggregated Data

Q. Develop annual, publicly available UPK factsheets with information on access to and outcomes from high-quality publicly funded preschool programs.¹⁷⁸ Data could include enrollment rates for UPK programs by geographic area, child and family demographics, inclusion measures, the number and capacity of dual immersion programs, suspension rates, and other metrics, as data are available, and following the CDE data suppression rules to protect student privacy. Share factsheets with the public, the Legislature, and state agency partners, highlighting any identified disparities. Use the information from the factsheets to inform direct impact indicators, as specified in *EC* Section 8263, the CDE uses to set priorities in its RFAs for CSPP, and to inform the use of other relevant funding to support the goals of increasing quality and access.

Support Quality and Access by Supporting New Administrators

- R.** Partner internally and externally to create training modules and provide technical assistance for new CSPP contractors and new CSPP administrators. These modules should build knowledge of program quality standards and contract compliance issues with a goal of increasing the number of contractors offering CSPP programs and ensuring that new CSPP administrators understand how to support the implementation of program quality standards.
- S.** Explore mechanisms to ensure elementary school principals overseeing UPK programs have training in early childhood and in supporting and promoting inclusive and affirming settings, including trauma-informed and positive discipline practices. Assess the feasibility of modifying administrative credential requirements to support a focus on early learning for leaders who oversee preschool and elementary programs.
- T.** Uplift to the CTC how current requirements of the Administrative Services Credential preclude ECE staff, many of whom have knowledge of child development and experience in preschool programs with monitored preschool program standards from having overseen TK, CSPP, and Head Start teachers. Elevate potential changes that may allow more individuals with preschool teaching and administration experience to obtain the Administrative Services Credential for Individuals Prepared in California. These could include (1) including a Child Development Program Director Permit as one of the allowable prerequisite teaching credentials and (2) allowing five years of successful, full-time experience administering a CSPP or Head Start program to count for clinical experience.

II.D Preschool Access Recommendations

This section includes recommendations to increase access to high-quality preschool programs for three- and four-year-old children offered through a mixed-delivery model, including TK. These are low- or no-cost strategies to increase access by ensuring preschool programs support child development and that programs meet family needs, including reasonable cost and effort to enroll.¹⁷⁹

Recommendations are organized around supporting child development and meeting family needs.¹⁸⁰ Important to all these recommendations is the ability to provide materials, resources, and outreach in the languages that match the needs of California’s preschoolers, their families, and the UPK programs that serve them.

¹⁷⁸ The data would ideally be aligned with the Early Childhood Integrated Data System, the Cradle-to-Career Data System, and other similar data systems.

¹⁷⁹ This is to align with the statutory language authorizing the Workgroup which states that the recommendations would not include “new system changes that create increased state or local costs to offer preschool across the mixed-delivery system.” See: *EC* Section 8202.6.

¹⁸⁰ This categorization modified the Access Framework presented to the Workgroup by Child Trends in March 2023. For a definition of each aspect of the Access Framework see appendix I.

Also critical to the long-term success of increasing access to high-quality preschool programs is program and educator access to the state’s quality improvement system. There must be on-ramps to ensure preschool programs across mixed-delivery settings can participate in quality improvement efforts to increase the number of programs offering high-quality preschool. This includes establishing opportunities for any program to voluntarily meet and regularly verify their adherence to the quality standards developed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, as authorized by *EC* Section 8203. Specific recommendations related to this topic are included in the “*Other Considerations*” section of this report as those approaches will require additional funding or generate cost pressures, putting them beyond the scope of the Workgroup.

Recommendations to Increase Access to Preschool Programs That Support Child Development

- A.** Provide additional guidance to accelerate inclusion in preschool programs, including information about the following.¹⁸¹
 - a.** Recruitment of children with disabilities, including building connections with district and SELPA partners.
 - b.** Braiding and blending funding streams to support inclusion and inclusive practices.
 - c.** How to use funds for adaptive equipment.
 - d.** How to facilitate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) process between LEAs and community- and home-based publicly funded preschool settings, for the provision of special education services.
 - e.** Resources on available services and programs that provide full access to a language-rich environment in English and American Sign Language (ASL).
- B.** Provide guidance on the current allowable use of funds for transportation for children with disabilities, including allowable costs of transporting children to and from home and the preschool program, and between the preschool program and other early learning and care settings, to support a full day of care for families and access to services.
- C.** Support the coordination of special education and related services among agencies supporting children with disabilities at the local, regional, and state level to create more inclusive programs and better serve children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, as determined appropriate through the IEP process:¹⁸²
 - a.** Provide information to SELPAs and LEAs for how LEAs can utilize funding sources for students with disabilities (for example, Special Education Early Intervention Preschool Grant funds) to hire or maintain developmental services support staff to provide services in LEA and non-LEA CBO preschool programs. This model should be inclusive of a variety of placement options, including FCCHs operating through a FCCHEN. This will provide the IEP team with opportunities to consider additional settings when determining the most beneficial setting for children to receive special education and related services.
 - b.** Encourage interested SELPAs to work with their County Office of Education (COEs) and UPK Coordinators to develop sample MOUs that could be shared statewide.¹⁸³
 - c.** Encourage the ongoing use of local UPK Mixed Delivery Planning grants and UPK Planning and Implementation grants and elevate best practices to build bidirectional local capacity for partnerships within LEAs and mixed delivery UPK programs, including FCCHENS.

¹⁸¹ In November of 2023, the Administration of Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released a “Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs” reaffirming that all young children with disabilities should have access to high-quality inclusive early childhood programs that provide individualized and appropriate support so they can fully participate alongside their peers without disabilities and achieve their full potential. See: Office of Early Childhood Development. 2023. “Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs.” <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/policy-guidance/policy-statement-inclusion-children-disability-early-childhood-programs>.

¹⁸² As stated in the Special Factors section of the IDEA, Part B, Section 614(d)(3)(B)(iv), the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team shall Consider the communication needs of the child, and in the case of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, consider the child’s language and communication needs, opportunities for direct communication with peers and professional personnel in the child’s language and communication mode, academic level, and full range of needs, including opportunities for direct instruction in the child’s language and communication mode.

¹⁸³ Head Start Programs are encouraged to have MOUs with LEAs. This could provide a source from which to model sample MOUs.

- d. Provide best practice recommendations to support the implementation of Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education (IECSE) models and use federal, state, and local funds to hire IECSE professionals to serve children in community- and home-based settings.
 - e. Develop collaboration and coordination strategies between SELPAs, LEAs, the Early Education Division, and the State Special Schools and Services Divisions at CDE to implement best practices for working with children with disabilities, including but not limited to deaf, hard of hearing, Blind, and deaf-blind children across mixed-delivery educational settings.
- D. Assess existing workforce development funding sources and recommend changes to ensure funding can be used for preschool educators to earn college credits, while ensuring workforce development programs are not duplicative.¹⁸⁴ Where possible, prioritize funding to support the development of multilingual and special education preschool educators.
 - E. Encourage the CTC to review reciprocity rules for the Child Development Permit and other early education credentials, with a goal of increasing the number of qualified UPK educators in California, especially multilingual and special education educators.
 - F. Uplift best practices in implementing Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways to obtain a Child Development Permit, including communicating recommendations to LEAs around using existing funding sources, like the Golden State Pathways Program, to support these programs. Provide best practices and technical assistance to encourage the workforce to utilize the Universal Design for Learning framework for proactively addressing the needs of diverse and exceptional learners.
 - G. Work with the resource and outreach centers at the California Schools for the Deaf through the California Department of Education’s State Special Schools and Services Division, to increase preschool access for deaf and hard of hearing children.

Recommendations for Increasing Access to Preschool Programs That Meet Family Needs, Including Cost and Reasonable Effort to Enroll and Attend

- H. Implement a continuous improvement process within the Early Education Division at CDE to award CSPP contracts to a wider array of providers more efficiently.
 - a. Streamline the RFA requirements for CSPP Expansion to minimize the administrative burden on existing CSPP contractors or Head Start grant recipients.
 - b. Modify the CSPP RFA requirements to simplify the application process and provide application technical assistance for prospective first-time CSPP contractors.
 - c. Clarify the process by which providers can operate full-day, part-year CSPP (i.e., eight to 10 hours per day for 185 days per year) and develop a management bulletin outlining this model and informing contractors how to participate.
- I. Support better connections and coordination across UPK programs and other programs, early learning and care infrastructure (for example, LPCs, R&Rs, etc.) and TK–12 infrastructure (for example, Statewide System of Support Geographic Lead Agencies) serving children and families from birth through third grade by:
 - a. Encouraging COEs to designate a UPK Coordinator.
 - b. Providing best practice recommendations on the roles and functions that UPK Planning and Implementation (UPK P&I) grantees at COEs (for example, UPK Coordinator(s)) should play in strengthening connections and coordination across UPK programs and other programs, and early learning and care infrastructure.
 - c. Requesting a no-cost extension from the Legislature for the UPK P&I Grant and the UPK Mixed Delivery Planning Grant.

¹⁸⁴ Existing workforce development funding sources may include, but are not limited to, those described in the California Department of Education and Commission on Teacher Credentialing’s jointly developed “Universal PreKindergarten Teacher Pipeline Resource Compendium.”

- d. Continuing to provide capacity building and technical assistance for UPK Coordinators to collaborate with the array of local early learning and care programs and partners.
 - e. Uplifting and promoting best practices related to collaboration among local entities, including where local early learning and care infrastructure partners have developed MOUs, data sharing agreements, or other formal collaboration spaces.
 - f. Supporting communication and collaboration between CSPP QRIS Block Grantees and Statewide System of Support Geographic Lead Agencies.
 - g. Providing best practice recommendations regarding strategies that enable LEAs and CBOs to collaborate and partner successfully.
 - h. Enhancing the statewide UPK communication campaign and communications materials in ways that are culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming, accessible in multiple languages, and mitigate potential concerns that families may have about enrolling their child in UPK due to immigration status to increase families' knowledge of UPK options through the mixed-delivery system.
 - i. Focusing communication efforts on communities and groups that have been traditionally underserved, including families with very low income, children with disabilities, and families living in rural communities.
 - j. Ensuring communication efforts notify parents of all of their UPK options, including TK, which will be universally free and available to all four-year-olds by 2025–26.
 - k. Enhancing the statewide UPK communication campaign and communications materials in ways that are culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming, accessible in multiple languages to attract educators for preschool programs and FCCHs interested in joining a FCCHEN.
 - l. Partnering with and leveraging resources from entities, such as First 5 California and its Communications Account, and relevant offices within the administration, such as the Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications in the Governor's Office of Planning and Research.
- J. Develop and communicate guidance to inform prospective and existing UPK programs about current flexibilities available to serve children in mixed-income settings, such as through combining public funding and private tuition.
 - K. Collaborate with CDSS to assess the impact of abandonment of care policies on currently enrolled families, families who are on waiting lists to enroll, and on program implementation and funding and make regulatory adjustments in alignment with findings.
 - L. Improve data collection efforts related to the UPK P&I Grant and the UPK Mixed Delivery Planning Grant and use this data to improve guidance and build stronger local connections between LEAs and early learning and care infrastructure.



- M.** Analyze which aspects of the CSPP application and enrollment process are most difficult for families to complete and revise the requirements to streamline the process and minimize burden on families. Provide comprehensive technical assistance on the revised process to CSPP contractors and relevant early learning and care infrastructure entities.
- N.** Analyze which aspects of the TK enrollment process are most difficult for families to navigate and share best practices with LEAs for how to build awareness, streamline the process and minimize burden on families.
- O.** Encourage community schools serving elementary grades to focus on supporting expanded access to high-quality UPK programs through a mixed-delivery model by collaborating with local preschool programs and local early learning and care infrastructure to offer full-day options to best meet the needs of children and families.¹⁸⁵
 - a.** Identify and uplift best practices from California’s community schools regarding strategies for supporting collaboration between community schools and local preschool programs and local early learning and care infrastructure.
 - b.** Develop guidance to support community schools to increase awareness of and connect with local preschool programs and local early learning and care infrastructure, including R&Rs.
 - c.** Assess the need for and feasibility of a statutory change that would allow preschool-age siblings of children attending community schools to be eligible for CSPP programs offered at the community school.
- P.** Continue to develop guidance and communicate widely on the existing ways the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P) funding can be used to serve children enrolled in TK in other early education and care programs, inclusive of CSPP and Head Start, to create full-day learning opportunities that are developmentally informed and supportive of children’s and families’ needs.

II.E Other Considerations

This section provides a prioritized list of issues and approaches that could be considered if funding becomes available in the future. Based on Workgroup discussions and public comment, these recommendations have been identified as critical strategies for improving quality and access. Some of these recommendations relate to, or will be impacted by, the issues described above in the System Acknowledgments section, which are being addressed through separate planning processes. Achieving these recommendations will require additional investment, partnerships, and in some cases, may require new statutory authority or changes to existing statutory authority.

- 1.** Support prospective UPK programs with pathways to contract with, or be recognized by, the state through technical assistance (for example, training on CSPP program management or DRDP implementation) and expanded funding as it becomes available, prioritizing areas where there are gaps in access (for example, for certain demographic groups, particular geographies, etc.):
 - a.** Fund the establishment and implementation of new ways for preschool programs to demonstrate they meet or are on track to meet standards as a pathway for new programs to contract with the state or a FCCHEN.
 - b.** Reevaluate existing measurement systems and incentives to address equity in resource distribution and support continuous quality improvement for all prospective UPK programs, including job-embedded coaching and quality improvement support for program administrators and educators.

¹⁸⁵ A community school is a public school that serves preschool through grade twelve and has community partnerships that support improved academic outcomes, whole-child engagement, and family development. Community school partnership strategies include integrated support services, extended learning time, and collaborative leadership and practices for educators and administrators. See: California Department of Education. 2022. Community Schools. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/ts-communityschools.asp>.

- c. Provide technical assistance and job-embedded professional learning (such as coaching) to programs to meet preschool quality standards, including through on-ramps within an expanded quality improvement systems funded by the CSPP QRIS Block Grant to support programs to meet preschool program quality standards developed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, as authorized by *EC* Section 8203.¹⁸⁶
 - d. Ensure job-embedded professional learning is aligned with the preschool quality standards and emphasize the development of competencies related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.¹⁸⁷
2. Support access to CSPP provided by FCCHs operating within a FCCHEN by including prioritization of FCCHEN services in future CSPP expansion funding in areas of the state with a low supply of preschool programs or under enrollment of eligible families in CSPP who may prefer preschool program services offered in an FCCH setting.
 3. Support access to dual language immersion programs by ensuring CSPP programs can apply for any future dual language immersion investments in the state education budget and by including prioritization of dual language immersion programs in future CSPP expansion funding.
 4. Revise and expand the CSPP QRIS Block Grant to support all CSPPs, reflecting CSPP expansion since 2012 and annual cost of living adjustments.
 5. Strengthen P–3 alignment:
 - a. Revise the CSPP Block Grant to support joint professional learning with educators from TK programs, and Head Start programs as applicable.
 - b. Promote approaches that support LEAs in considering the role of CSPP and TK in their strategic planning and goal setting for student outcomes.
 6. Update CSPP teacher requirements, either through statutory change or changes to the CTC Child Development Permit requirements, to reflect the intent of the Administration’s Master Plan recommendations and require educators in preschool classrooms, including those operated by an FCCH in a FCCHEN, to meet the following minimum qualifications:
 - a. Lead teachers have a minimum of an Associate of Arts (AA) degree with an Early Childhood Education (ECE) specialization.
 - b. The second adult, and, if applicable, the third adult in the CSPP that is not the lead teacher has a minimum of the Associate Teacher Permit (12 units of ECE).

Note: A Child Development Permit is considered a property right of the holder. All permits authorized before any potential changes to the permit requirements would still be valid to the permit holder as long as the permit holder continues to meet the requirements for renewal of that Permit. Current holders of a valid Child Development Permit would not be required to “transition” to these new standards or requirements, unless otherwise changed in statute.

¹⁸⁶ Note that CDE is undergoing a process to update the CSPP QRIS Block Grant system in response to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, changes in available funding, and the mandated transition of quality projects funded through the Childcare and Development Fund from CDE to CDSS, and pending reductions in investments in the broader QCC system (as First 5 California is in its final cycle of IMPACT funding). These updates will ensure a data-driven continuous improvement process that supports programs to achieve and maintain CSPP program standards and continuously improve.

¹⁸⁷ Professional learning should be aligned to the California ECE competencies, which describe the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that early childhood educators need in order to provide high-quality care and education to young children and their families. These competencies also form the basis of the Early Childhood Education Teaching Performance Expectations set by the CTC.

7. Provide flexibility on program ratios and group sizes:

- a.** For programs to implement a 1:8 ratio with a group size cap of 24, or a 1:10 ratio with a group size cap of 20, for classrooms that serve a majority of four-year-olds. Adjust other parameters (for example, napping) as needed.¹⁸⁸
- b.** For programs operating classrooms that serve a majority of three-year-old children to implement a group size of 17 with one teacher and one additional adult.

Note: Only implement recommendation 7 if updates are made to CSPP teacher requirements to require lead teachers to have a minimum of an Associate of Arts (AA) degree with an Early Childhood Education specialization and to require the second adult in the CSPP who is not the lead teacher has a minimum of the Associate Teacher Permit (12 units of ECE). (See Recommendation 6)

- 8.** Align the use of the three-year-old adjustment factor with the statutory definition of three-year-old as found in EC Section 8205, allowing programs to access the adjustment factor for the entire school year that the three-year-old is enrolled.¹⁸⁹
- 9.** Explore the appropriate requirements for staff in LEAs and FCCHENs that oversee UPK programs to ensure adequate familiarity with the needs of preschool-age children and their families and educators.
- 10.** Provide financial incentives and invest in effective models for professionals to achieve permits, credentials, and degrees, and to progress along leadership pathways. Incentives could include scholarships or other financial aid, stipends, and resources to pay substitutes; effective models could include apprenticeships, other “earn and learn” programs, and models that offer online instruction or opportunities for evening and weekend coursework.¹⁹⁰



¹⁸⁸ Programs should consider special education enrollment and impact of caseloads when establishing adult-to-child ratios.

¹⁸⁹ Currently, programs get an “adjustment factor” of 80 percent more than the daily reimbursement rate for children age forty-seven months or younger. However, programs cease getting this benefit on the child’s fourth birthday, even if it is the child’s first year in CSPP and they are considered to be a three-year-old child based on the statutory definition.

¹⁹⁰ “Earn and learn” programs are those in which preschool educators experience learning and preparation while also engaging in paid work in early learning and care programs.

11. Collaborate with the CTC and institutions of higher education to explore flexible, cost-effective, culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming ways to measure early educator competencies and acknowledge expertise, including:
 - a. Competency assessment, micro-credentials, and credit for prior work experience to meet requirements of the different levels of the Child Development Permit Matrix, including through the use of California’s community college system.¹⁹¹
 - b. Scalable badging and micro-credential models that result in the assessment and demonstration of measurable competencies (aligned to the CTC Teaching Performance Expectations) that stack toward the California Early Childhood Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP) 8 or Child Development Associate (CDA) requirements.
 - c. Pathways for seasoned ECE educators and administrators to transition to UPK leadership and administration.
12. Work across state agencies to streamline the eligibility and enrollment process to make it easier for families to choose and enroll in their preferred program:
 - a. Collaborate with state partners to create a revamped centralized eligibility system that addresses challenges with previous versions of centralized eligibility lists in California.¹⁹²
 - b. Ensure processes and materials promote inclusion and equity and are culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming.
 - c. Provide comprehensive training and technical assistance related to UPK programs, including technical assistance for prioritizing enrollment of historically underserved communities and children with disabilities.
13. Require the CDE to assign a unique identifier to CSPP preschoolers, as well as to educators in CBOs and FCCHEs, and collect data that is comparable to data collected on CSPP and TK students and educators in LEAs. Use this data to publicly report (for example, through a public dashboard) on preschool access and quality across all settings.
14. Provide a tiered structure of support for implementing anti-bias and anti-racist practices with (1) technical assistance to UPK programs on anti-racist and anti-bias practices, (2) use of the ACSES, or a similar tool, to provide individualized technical assistance to UPK programs on equitable teacher-child interactions with racially minoritized children, and (3) continuous quality improvement with ongoing observation, reflection, and technical assistance for UPK Programs to implement anti-racist and anti-bias practices using the ACSES tool, or a similar observation tool.
15. Require the CDE to develop a system to collect and integrate data in ways that can inform efforts to increase diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, as specified in Recommendation II.C.O for inclusion in UPK factsheets, including collecting data on the use of federal Title I funding for preschool.



¹⁹¹ All 116 California community college campuses offer some form of tuition-free education. For several decades, many students have had access to tuition-free community college through the California College Promise Grant, which waives tuition fees for California resident students, and the California Dream Act (for non-residents who meet the needs-based criteria indicated in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid). For students who do not qualify for the California College Promise Grant, colleges can use California Promise, another source of funding created under Assembly Bill 19 (Ch. 735, Stats. 2017), to waive tuition. See: Picazo, Joshua. 2023. “Tuition-Free Access Expanding Across California Community College Campuses.” EdSource, November 1, 2023. <https://edsources.org/2023/tuition-free-access-expanding-across-california-community-college-campuses/699832>.

¹⁹² This should build on California’s Preschool Development Grant-Renewal funding, which funded CDSS to develop a statewide verification hub.

16. Expand and extend funding for the UPK P&I Grant and require the designation of a UPK Coordinator role housed at COEs. Allow UPK Coordinators to serve a single county or a consortium of counties, as necessary based on local needs. Additional funding should support capacity building and technical assistance for UPK Coordinators and support for UPK Coordinators to collaborate with local birth to age twelve systems.
17. Advance legislation to make any necessary administrative changes and increase investments in Shared Services Networks (SSN) that can support small center- and home-based preschool programs to provide pedagogical and professional learning supports that are aligned with positive child-outcomes and responsive to diverse communities, and to offer business services to support program and provider stability.¹⁹³
18. Provide a separate allocation for California’s Schools for the Deaf and Blind Early Start Education to operate preschool programs, such as CSPP.



¹⁹³ Shared Service Networks are developed to “strengthen small early learning and care businesses by supporting them to become more financially sound and more efficient, which allows them to offer cost-effective and high-quality early learning and care opportunities to children and families.” See: First 5 California. 2021. “Request for Applications: Shared Services Alliance Pilot for Early Learning and Care.” <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PZCcyeUqqK9Sxhy39wK9HNkwBSMQCO2S/view>.

III. Appendices

Appendix I: Working Definitions

Community: A community is a group of people who share one or more of the following:

- An interest in, commitment to, or focus on a locality or region.
- Common or intersecting identities and lived experiences.
- Shared or similar properties, goals, and directions.
- A commitment to advancing the common good as defined by those living and working in the community.

Culture: Culture refers to a group or community that shares common experiences or perspectives that shape how its members understand the world.

Culturally, Linguistically, and Racially Affirming Practice: Practices that honor and value children and families' cultures, prior experiences, social identities, and linguistic resources to make learning and engagement more relevant and effective.

Early Learning and Care Infrastructure: Early learning and care infrastructure refers to planning, referral, professional learning and development, and coordination of entities such as UPK Coordinators, County Offices of Education (COEs), resource and referral agencies (R&Rs), alternative payment programs, and local child care planning councils (LPCs).

Equity: The Workgroup's focus is on equity for children. This means access to resources, opportunities, and experiences that result in positive outcomes that are not typically or historically associated with children's demographic characteristics. Equity is addressed at the program level by ensuring every child and family has access to what they need to succeed and thrive, including culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse qualified and supported educators who create effective learning environments and foster whole child development. Equity is addressed at the system level by creating policies and procedures that eliminate systemic racism and other forms of oppression, support preschool educators, and ensure that programs share power with families and offer preschool services with respect and fairness. This Workgroup has developed a child-centered framework, which means its recommendations will support children's equitable experiences and outcomes, often by improving and increasing positive experiences and conditions for families and educators such that children thrive as a result.¹⁹⁴

Equity-centered work focuses on access (the extent to which access to services and programs are being addressed), experiences (the extent to which the quality of programs and services are meeting the unique strengths and needs of Black or African American, Indigenous, Hispanic or Latino, and other children of color, children who are bilingual or multilingual, and children with disabilities), and outcomes (the extent to which there is explicit attention to, and a core goal of closing, disparities).¹⁹⁵

High-Quality Universal Preschool and High-Quality UPK: The Master Plan outlined a stated goal to provide high-quality universal preschool options for all three-year-old children experiencing poverty, all three-year-old children with disabilities, and universally for all four-year-old children. *EC* Section 8320 defines universal preschool as programs that offer part-day or full-day educational programs for three- and four-year-old children, that may be offered through a mixed-delivery system. In California, implementation of UPK includes TK, which is the only universal option and will be available to all four-year-olds by 2025–26, alongside an array of other preschool options, some of which are eligibility dependent, through a mixed-delivery system to promote parental choice.

¹⁹⁴ For a full description of the Workgroup's child-centered framework, see: UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup. 2023. "UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup Child-Centered Framework." <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Sk31eT5KS2K2wWeMOZ7SK2YbGXZJUPrw/view>.

¹⁹⁵ This working definition was drawn from the Workgroup's Child-Centered Framework and work completed as part of California's Preschool Development Grants Renewal in collaboration with The Children's Equity Project. See: Meek, Shantel, Iheoma U. Iruka, Rosemarie Allen, Dawn A. Yazzie, Veronica Fernandez, Evandra Catherine, Kent McIntosh, et al. 2020. "Start with Equity: 14 Priorities to Dismantle Systemic Racism in Early Care and Education." Tempe, AZ: The Children's Equity Project. <https://childandfamilysuccess.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2020-12/14-priorities-equity-121420.pdf>.

More generally, high-quality universal preschool programs are programs that create the conditions for all children to thrive. Key areas of quality include child-centered learning environments; family engagement; workforce; and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. All areas of quality should be informed by research and shaped by lived experience. High-quality universal preschool programs ensure educators are equipped to provide playful, intentional, and individualized learning experiences with responsive interactions and the intent to build cognitive, social–emotional, and physical development; and create nurturing, inclusive, and culturally, linguistically, and racially affirming environments that reflect family perspectives on quality in the communities they serve; and provide foundational conditions such as engaging family-style meal service that offers fresh, nutritious and culturally relevant meals.

For the purposes of this Workgroup, which is charged with recommending changes to *EC* Section 8203 to improve preschool quality and for making recommendations to increase access to UPK more generally, high-quality UPK includes Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and preschool programs pursuant to *EC* Section 8320 that provide learning experiences, coordinated services, and referrals for families to access health and social–emotional support services, and that meet indicators of quality determined by the Superintendent pursuant to *EC* Section 8203.

Inclusion: Inclusion for preschool children refers to the rightful presence of all preschool children in an intentionally created learning environment that fosters belonging and in which preschool children with disabilities are fully integrated into early childhood programs and participate alongside their peers without disabilities. The learning environment emphasizes the full humanity of preschool children with disabilities. It includes holding high expectations, providing access to high-quality academic instruction aligned with general education standards and the necessary resources to support learning, and intentionally promoting participation in all learning and social activities facilitated by the student’s individualized needs outlined in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). It also includes using evidence-based teaching to foster children’s holistic development (cognitive, language, communication, physical, behavioral, and social–emotional), friendships with peers, and a sense of belonging. This applies to all young children with mild or invisible disabilities, as well as to those with the most severe, visible, or significant disabilities.¹⁹⁶ Creating a learning environment where preschool children with disabilities are valued, included, and encouraged to grow requires collaboration among early educators to leverage resources to develop innovative teaching practices. It is important to note that inclusion and what constitutes as the least restrictive environment depends on the educational needs of the child.¹⁹⁷ The federal definition of a regular early childhood program is a program that includes a majority (at least 50 percent) of children without IEPs.¹⁹⁸

Mixed-delivery system: A system of early childhood education services that are delivered through a variety of providers, programs, and settings, including Head Start agencies or delegate agencies funded under the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 9831, et seq.), public, private, or proprietary agencies, including CBOs, public schools, and local education agencies that offer center-based child care and preschool programs, tribal child care and preschool, and family child care through a Family Child Care Home Education Network (FCCHEN).¹⁹⁹

Preschool children or preschoolers: As a general definition, preschoolers turn three- or four-years-old prior to the beginning of the school year. For the purposes of the California State Preschool Program, the definition of a three- or four-year-old child differs and is provided in *EC* Section 8205.

Preschool educators: The teachers, teacher assistants, paraprofessionals, administrators, and aides that work in preschool programs, including those in community-, school-, and home-based settings operating a preschool program as part of an FCCHEN.

¹⁹⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, “Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs.”

¹⁹⁷ For deaf and hard of hearing children, a least restrictive environment is one that meets their unique communication and related needs. See: U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights. 1992. Deaf Students Education Services. Notice of Policy Guidance. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/hq9806.html>.

¹⁹⁸ U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs. 2023. IDEA Part B Child Count and Educational Environments for School Year 2022-2023. <https://data.ed.gov/dataset/docs/idea-section-618-state-part-b-child-count-and-educational-environments#24dc7efe-8b96-4e39-a5de-7a85847da491>.

¹⁹⁹ See: *EC* Section 8320.

Appendix II: Workgroup Members

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²⁰⁰ Gina Fromer participated in Workgroup meetings until September 2023, when she was replaced by Naeemah Charles.

Brief Workgroup member statements can be found on the California Educators Together UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup page.

See: <https://www.caeducatorstogether.org/groups/bzsgmy7y/upk-mixed-delivery-quality-and-access-workgroup>

Appendix III: Birth-to-Five Systems Issues That Are Beyond the Scope of the Workgroup

Experts and practitioners confirm what parents and families have always known—early childhood is a time of wonder that starts at birth and extends through the early elementary years. This is why many efforts that have sought to increase children’s access to high-quality early education experiences have focused on a broader age range and set of early learning and care programs than those identified by the Legislature as part of this report.²⁰¹ This section includes considerations, uplifted by the Workgroup and members of the public, related to broader issues that go beyond the scope of this Workgroup but which are important for the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature and the California Department of Finance (DOF) to understand.

Reimbursement Rates

Funding structures and reimbursement rates are foundational for the stability of programs that accept subsidies or directly contract with the state to provide early learning and care services. In 2022, CDSS, in consultation with the CDE, convened a workgroup to make recommendations about the state’s reimbursement rate system. That workgroup found that,

Despite the strengths and quality currently present in California’s early learning and care programs, and the critical and nurturing role that the predominantly women of color workforce plays in educating and caring for California’s young ones, the current reimbursement rate-setting methodology establishes rates that are not sufficient to cover the true cost of providing early learning and care services in accordance with current state licensing and program quality requirements.²⁰²

The report goes on to discuss the “early learning and care market failure,” which results from the fact that (1) high-quality early learning and care programs create a public benefit to society by supporting optimal child development and a family’s ability to work, (2) most families are unable to pay for the cost of high-quality programs, and (3) early learning and care programs do not receive sufficient revenue, from private fees or public subsidies, to meet the true cost of providing services, limiting the extent to which families can access the programs of their choice.²⁰³ This market failure has an impact on the stability of programs and providers across the birth-to-five system and addressing this issue goes beyond the scope of this Workgroup. The state is seeking to make progress in this space through other mechanisms. See II.A. Recommendations: System Acknowledgements for more information.

Bridging Birth-to-Eight Systems and Supporting Continuity for Children and Families Across Systems

Children and families do not operate in the silos that policymakers create around early learning and care programs. Families make choices about their children’s early learning and care experiences based on a complex array of factors, preferences, and opportunities. Factors can include whether a child can stay in the same care arrangement for the parent’s entire workday, whether the early education and care arrangement can accommodate an older or a younger sibling, proximity to home, cost to attend, or whether the family feels a sense of belonging.

Creating an equitable and high-quality early education and care system requires policies that meet the needs of children and families from birth through the early elementary years. A continuity of care across the mixed-delivery system and beyond is essential to sustaining and building on the benefits of a high-quality preschool program. It is important to consider the impact of policies across early education, child care, and elementary school systems and to intentionally create bridges and foster alignment across systems to create a more flexible and higher-quality system for serving children and families.

²⁰¹ This includes the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care, The State’s P-3 Report, and The National Academies of Sciences transforming the Workforce and Transforming the Financing reports.

²⁰² California Department of Social Services. 2022. *A Report by the Rate and Quality Workgroup*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Social Services. [https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/CalWORKS/CCT/CCDD/Rate%20and%20Quality%20Stakeholder%20Workgroup%20Report_August%202022_FINAL%20ADA%20\(2\).pdf?ver=2022-08-24-081240-333](https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/CalWORKS/CCT/CCDD/Rate%20and%20Quality%20Stakeholder%20Workgroup%20Report_August%202022_FINAL%20ADA%20(2).pdf?ver=2022-08-24-081240-333).

²⁰³ California Department of Social Services. *A Report by the Rate and Quality Workgroup*, 4.

Workforce (For Example: Pipelines and Supports)

While preschool educators are foundational to both quality and access goals, the range of issues impacting educator recruitment, preparation, professional learning, compensation, and retention across the range of birth to five early learning and care settings extend far beyond the scope of the Workgroup. The Workgroup and public consistently emphasized the interdependencies of early education workforce issues, such as the career pathways educators may take to advance professionally and the impact that varying workforce qualifications standards can have on individuals' career trajectories. Other issues include the need for overall recruitment and retention efforts across all programs as California expands UPK and TK while also facing educator and workforce shortages across multiple sectors. The problem of inadequate wages impacts these issues across the full spectrum of early education programs; pay disparities among members of the early learning and care workforce in different settings may further influence instability as the early education and care landscape in the state shifts.

Additionally, the need to intentionally recruit early educators that reflect the cultural and linguistic identities of the communities they serve spans across all programs. While this report makes some specific workforce preparation and professional learning recommendations that fall within the Workgroup's scope, the need for more culturally responsive and student-centered recruitment and preparation opportunities is critical to building a robust; highly qualified; and culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse workforce across the early learning and care landscape. This can include the following that go beyond the scope of the Workgroup:

- The use of cohort programs and affinity spaces to support and retain early educators from specific cultures who reflect the identities of the children they teach.
- Recruitment efforts and additional funding to increase the number of early educators, staff, and programs that can serve children with disabilities.
- Ensuring a variety of institutions of higher education offer affordable preparation programs for the Child Development Permit and teaching credentials that meet the needs of prospective early educators across the state.
- Infusing cross-cultural, language, and academic development and bilingual, cross-cultural, language, and academic development components into preparation and professional learning requirements for early childhood educators.
- Exploring funding to support paid and supervised clinical practice to meet Child Development Permit and credential requirements, in addition to college credits.
- Creating a pathway for educators and administrators who want to transition from one early learning and care program to another.

Facilities

A developmentally appropriate preschool program engages and supports not only a child's cognitive and social-emotional development, but also their physical development. As an important component, the facilities of a preschool program contribute to and support the physical development of the youngest learners, such as having child-sized sinks and toilets that are easily accessible, as well as developmentally appropriate playground equipment for this age group. Children have various and distinct needs as they learn and grow. Early learning and care facilities issues impact programs and educators serving children from birth through the elementary years. Programs will often co-locate or share space, from expanded learning programs using elementary school facilities when school is not in session to CBOs that operate CSPP, Head Start, and other state-funded early learning and care programs. Expanding the number of developmentally appropriate facilities is critical to increasing access to high-quality preschool opportunities and to ensuring programs can create an inclusive learning environment while considering children's individual learning needs and acknowledging that what constitutes an inclusive learning environment may differ for children of varying needs. The state has acted in a number of ways to begin to address facilities issues for programs serving children and youth from birth through twelfth grade. This includes the California State Preschool, Transitional Kindergarten, and Full-Day Kindergarten Facilities Grant Program; the Child Care and Development Infrastructure Grant Program; the Charter School Facilities Program; and a number of services related to modernization, construction, and financial hardship through the Office of Public Schools Construction Services. As such, facilities issues go beyond the scope of the Workgroup.

Appendix IV: Key Workgroup Resources

- A. For the Crosswalk of 22 *CCR*, 5 *CCR*, and Transitional Kindergarten Program Standards, see: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/15xElSs5N5aHZThTKBVLwYvTOgvGkYkid/view?usp=sharing>.
- B. For the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup Child-Centered Framework, see: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Sk31eT5KS2K2wWeMOZ7SK2YbGXZJUPrw/view>.
- C. For the 5 *CCR* CSPP Quality Standards Specific to the Workgroup, see: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/12zSIK9yIH9RpyUyG78mxFBxc6yGXCSDx/view>.
- D. For the 5 *CCR* CSPP Regulations Referenced in Section II.B. “Recommendations: Preschool Quality Standards,” see: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sobOHA0wbyq6km7QfeHgCqPkS0W8H2rT/view?usp=sharing>.
- E. For the Summary of Recent Management Bulletins, see: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1V7wjNeLDbUatKRnR-E0cy-Z_GhVuCxjviHCwueq4hxw/edit.
- F. For all other materials developed for the Workgroup, see: <https://www.caeducatorstogether.org/groups/bzsgmy7y/upk-mixed-delivery-quality-and-access-workgroup>.

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“History will judge us by the difference we make in the everyday lives of children.”

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