

**GIVING KIDS A CHANCE:
INVESTING IN
EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION**

A discussion sponsored by:

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and the
California State University Institute
For Education Reform**

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Gary Hart, Founder

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The CSU Institute for Education Reform

CSU, Sacramento

6000 J Street

Sacramento, California 95819-6018

Telephone: (916) 278-4600

FAX: (916) 278-5014

Internet: <http://www.csus.edu/ier/materials.html>

Report writer: Kathleen Beasley

INTRODUCTION

EFFECTIVENESS OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

In brighter economic times when California was flush with growing revenues and expanding annual budgets, universal preschool was on the list of reforms that could help improve student achievement. Emerging research on the importance of a child's early years as a strong foundation for later academic success supported the concept. In addition, many working parents saw a benefit not only for their children's future but also were attracted to the idea as a childcare solution.

Today, with a looming budget deficit, state policy makers are more inclined to spend time scrambling to save existing programs rather than focusing on new initiatives. But that does not mean that preschool efforts have been shelved. California already invests billions of dollars in early care and education programs, an amount that has been substantially enhanced by funding from Proposition 10, the tobacco tax measure that provides funding for early child development and family support initiatives. In addition, the federal government is increasing support for Head Start and other early childhood programs, as well as emphasizing the importance of school readiness in its education programs.

With such substantial funding sources in the pipeline, it is critical that investments be made carefully in effective programs that promise the greatest success for students. Fortunately, research conducted over the past two decades provides helpful indicators of the characteristics that lead to successful programs and documents a compelling argument through cost-benefit analysis for widely replicating these programs.

FEBRUARY 28, 2002 SEMINAR

On February 28, 2002, the California Education Policy Seminar and the California State University Institute for Education Reform sponsored a discussion of the effectiveness of early care and education programs and the steps that California is taking to enhance school readiness. More than 40 educators, state policy makers and education researchers attended the session.

The seminar began with a presentation by Arthur J. Reynolds, professor of social work, educational psychology and human development at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Reynolds directs the Chicago Longitudinal Study, one of the largest studies of the effects of early childhood intervention for children from low-income families.

In addition, a panel of four California educators shared their perspectives on school readiness issues. They were Pamela Short-Powell, assistant superintendent for schools, curriculum and instruction for the Pasadena Unified School District; Crystal Kochendorfer, a Capistrano Unified School District board trustee and vice-chair of the Children and Families Commission of Orange County; Maria L. Chavez, senior director of the Migrant Education Program, Region IX, San Diego County Office of Education; and David W. Gordon, superintendent of the Elk Grove Unified School District.

This report documents the proceedings at the seminar. The presentations are summarized, along with highlights of the question-and-answer exchanges that followed the presentations.

(Comments made by individuals are summarized without quotation. All text should be regarded as paraphrasing and/or synthesizing what was actually said, and not as direct quotes attributable to the presenters or other participants.)

PRESENTATION OF DR. ARTHUR J. REYNOLDS

*Dr. Arthur J. Reynolds is professor of social work, educational psychology and human development at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is affiliated with the Waisman Center and the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For the past 17 years, he has directed the Chicago Longitudinal Study, one of the largest and longest-running studies of the effects of early childhood intervention for children from low-income families. A focal point of the ongoing project is the long-term educational and social benefits of the Chicago Child-Parent Centers, a Title I program in the Chicago public schools since 1967. Reynolds has written extensively on the implications of early childhood research in his book *Success in Early Intervention* and his soon-to-be-released volume entitled *Early Childhood Programs for a New Century*.*

EFFECTIVE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The Chicago Longitudinal Study traces the long-term effects of participation in comprehensive early childhood programs. This presentation today discusses the major issues in early childhood education, the basic findings of the Chicago Longitudinal Study, the program elements that seem to explain the long-term findings, and the resulting indications for early childhood education policy.

For the past few years, there have been a greatly increased and renewed commitment to access to quality education. States including California, Illinois and Wisconsin are emphasizing early childhood education and developing master plans for the actions that need to be taken. It is estimated that about \$20 billion annually is invested in center-based early childhood education from both state and federal funding sources. Given the recent “No Child Left Behind” federal legislation, budget proposals to increase preschool funding and the widespread demands for high-quality education, these investments are going to increase in the future.

With this high level of interest, it becomes even more important to understand what we are getting from our investments – what effect these expenditures are having on children’s development. In addition, we need to understand how we can improve access and quality for all children. Specifically, we need to know how to design a system for children from birth to age 8 to ensure that the system, when organized well and funded appropriately, will yield the largest benefit relative to cost.

We have learned a lot about what works and what doesn’t work; the science of what we know is much stronger today than it has ever been. There are good model programs and we know that if they are imple-

mented well, they can be effective in promoting school readiness, as well as long-term social and educational success.

Six Key Themes

Examining the major issues in early childhood education, six key themes emerge:

- **How should early childhood education be organized?** Who should run it: public schools, or a combination of public schools and public health agencies, or some other choice? Should it be uniform throughout the states or should it be tailored differently in different places?
- **What are the key elements of effective programs?** From what has been learned in the Chicago study and others, the answer includes a strong literacy component, parent involvement, and comprehensive health and social services.
- **Are the key elements the same for all children?** For example, the Head Start model provides comprehensive services, but perhaps the same extensive system is not needed for children from middle-income families.
- **How can the timing and duration of services be balanced from birth to age 8?** Today there is a very fragmented system for preschool and the early elementary years. There is a conflict over how to use new investments. Should they be used to improve the quality of existing programs? Should we focus on birth to 3, 3 to 5 or 5 to 8? We need to get past these debates and find a good balance of timing and duration of intervention by thinking of early childhood education from a system perspective across the span of ages.

- **What is the optimal funding structure among federal, state and local agencies?** How can we make the most effective use of resources?
- **What are the key features of the accountability system for standards, assessment, monitoring and evaluation?** How do we know that what we are doing is working; how do we measure it?

THE CHICAGO STUDY

The Chicago Longitudinal Study is one of the largest and longest-running studies of a public program. It looks at whether participation in the Child-Parent Center Program is associated with school readiness, school performance and other indicators of success in later years. While the study examines many facets of the program, this presentation focuses on two questions: Is participation associated with later child and family well being? And do the estimated benefits of program participation exceed costs? When government is investing resources, it is important to identify programs with benefits that exceed costs – those with the biggest bang for the buck – so that funding those can be made a priority over other programs.

The most fundamental hypothesis that provides a framework for the study is that early childhood education provides a foundation for healthy development that snowballs to long-term educational and social benefits. When children receive enhancement that increases their literacy skills, it provides an early opportunity for children to succeed. Teachers have higher expectations of them and they are less likely to receive special education or be tracked into lower-level classrooms. It sets them on a more positive trajectory. Similarly, the family support and involvement that occurs in early childhood education usually results in a more positive interaction among children, schools and parents; there is a greater level of engagement of families and that provides the children with an advantage over time.

The program that the study tracked is the Child-Parent Center Program, developed by Dr. Lorraine Sullivan, a Chicago school superintendent, and established in Chicago in 1967 under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. School districts

had been encouraged to employ imaginative thinking and new approaches to meeting the educational needs of poor children. The model for the program is illustrated in **Chart 1**. The Center provides a half-day program that begins at age 3 and that is sited at the same location as a kindergarten and lower elementary grades. The program continues providing support for the child through the third grade. Continuity is built into the system because the same principal is in charge of both programs and children do not move from one location to another.

The Center program follows the Head Start model in terms of offering comprehensive health and social services. It has two specific focuses: a basic literacy foundation and parent involvement. The literacy component includes structured learning activities, small and large group work, field trips and other elements designed to promote early literacy, language development and pre-reading awareness. The parental component includes a parent resource teacher, parent room activities and home support. Before welfare reform, which has resulted in more working parents, 80 percent of parents participated in Center activities on a regular basis.

Another key factor of the Child-Parent Center Program is that all of the teachers have college degrees and are compensated as teachers, reducing turnover and increasing the quality of education. The child/teacher ratios are also low – 17:2 in preschool and 25:2 in kindergarten and the early primary grades. The early primary program includes individualized instruction in basic skills, extra instructional materials and a special reading program.

To look at the effects of participation in this program, in 1985 the Chicago Longitudinal Study began with a sample of 1,539 children born in 1980. A cohort of 989 children participated in the Child-Parent Center Program. They were compared to 550 children of the same age who enrolled in a program that was typical at that time in Chicago, full-day kindergarten. Thus, the study is not a comparison to children who received no intervention, but is an apples-to-apples comparison of different intervention approaches – full-day kindergarten intervention vs. a longer-duration program from age 3 to 9. That means this study's results are fairly conservative in terms of the effect since they tell us what the added value of the Child-Parent Centers is

Chart 1 — CPC Program Model
Child-Parent Center Program

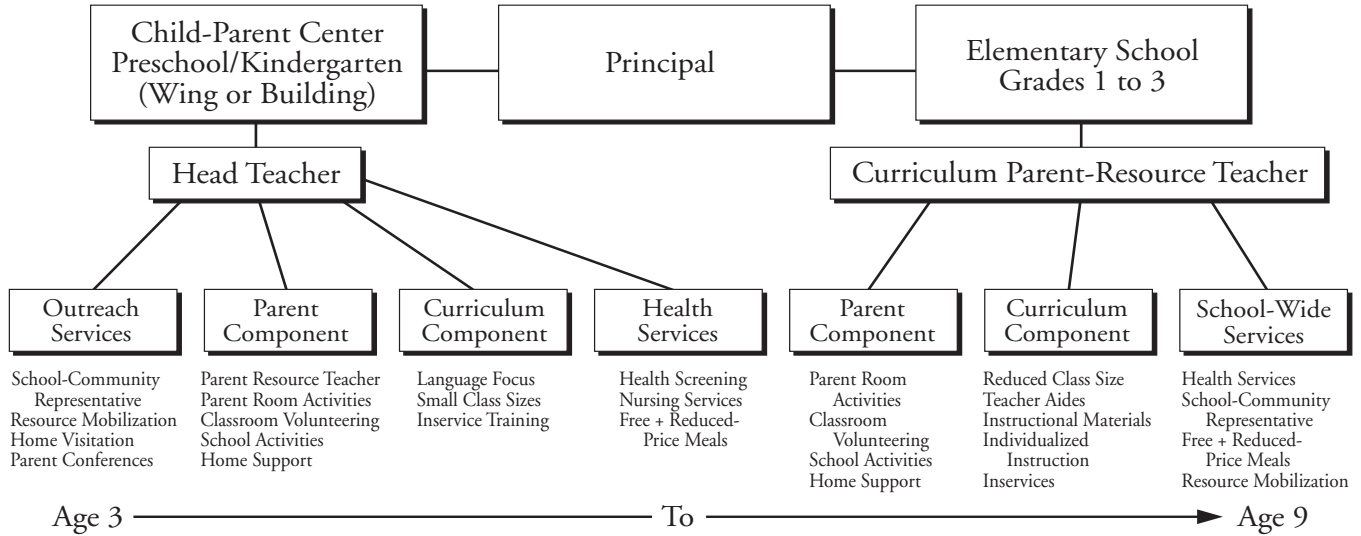
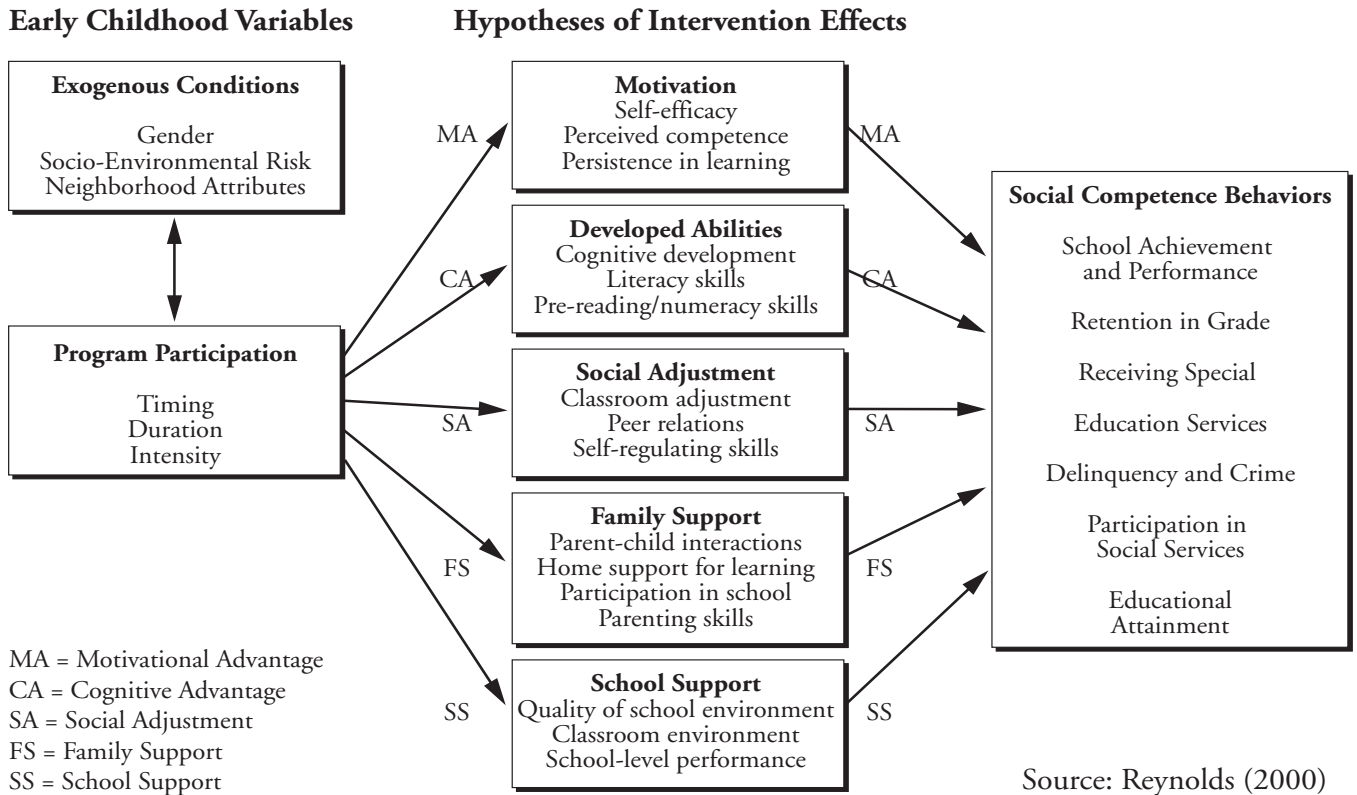


Chart 2 — **Alternative Paths Leading to Social Competence**



above and beyond the typical intervention alternative. **Chart 2** summarizes the hypotheses that were explored by the study.

The study followed the progress of both groups over the years; by age 18, the study was still tracking 1,300 of the children from the original sample of 1,539. In terms of school readiness, the preschool group at age 5 rated at about the 47th percentile on a nationally normed test compared to the 30th percentile for the comparison group. But this scholastic advantage is only one measurement of the Center's effect. The four charts on this page and the next illustrate other findings:

- **Chart 3:** Special education placements were about 40 percent fewer for those who participated in the Center program than for those in the comparison group.
- **Chart 4:** The rate of juvenile arrests by age 18 was fewer for those who participated in the Center program.
- **Chart 5:** Substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect by age 17 were cut almost in half for Center children.
- **Chart 6:** High school completion by age 21 shows a 10-point difference between rates for Center children and the comparison group.

Overall, the study indicates that participation in the Center program provided children with greater levels of school readiness, higher school achievement test scores through the age of 15, less need for school remedial services (grade retention or special education placement) through age 18, lower rates of child maltreatment through age 17, greater consumer skills, lower rates of juvenile arrest and higher rates of high school completion. In terms of family outcomes, the study showed that parents were more involved in their children's school, were more satisfied with their children's education and had higher expectations for their children's educational attainment.

Turning to the cost-benefit analysis, the study's unique findings across a broad range of indicators show that improving large-scale early childhood programs provides a cost advantage. One example is the cost-benefit analysis for the reduced need for special education services. The study indicates that one outcome is an average of

Chart 3 —
Any Special Education
Placement by Age 18

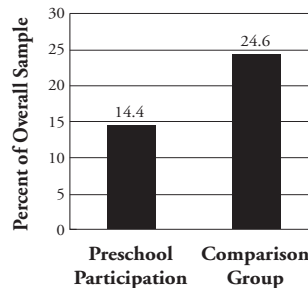


Chart 4 —
Any Juvenile
Arrested by Age 18

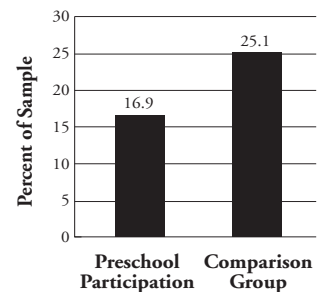


Chart 5 —
Rates of Reported Abuse
or Neglect by Age 17

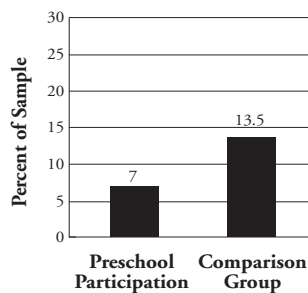
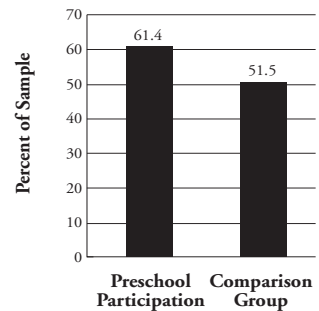


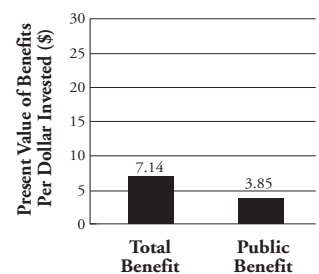
Chart 6 —
High School Completion
Rates By Age 21



.7 fewer years in special education per child. When adjustments are made for inflation and other factors, the economic benefit per participant is \$4,180 – about the cost of one half day for one year for a child in the Child-Parent Center.

This one calculation of economic benefit from reduced special education is joined by the impact of reduced grade retention, reduced child abuse and neglect, increased high school completion and all of the other effects are weighed. When a full-scale cost-benefit analysis is completed (**Chart 7**), for every dollar invested there is a \$7.14 return to society at large and public savings of \$3.85.

Chart 7 —
Benefit to Cost Ratios for
Program Participation



Where does this take us in terms of early childhood education? The Chicago study identifies eight principles of effective early childhood programs:

1. **Target higher risk children age 3 to 9.** The benefits are more and intervention can make a bigger difference for these children.
2. **Extend intervention to third grade and use a school delivery system.** The idea of a continuous childhood system organized by a single entity makes a lot of sense.
3. **Provide comprehensive services.** This includes physical health and social services.
4. **Offer a multi-faceted parent program.** This includes parent room activities, family-school relations, parent education and training, and home visits.
5. **Create a child-centered structured curriculum.** Focus on language, individualized experiences and story books.
6. **Small class sizes.** Ideally limit classes to 16 children with two teachers for an 8:1 ratio.
7. **Provide regular staff development.** Certified teachers and professional development make a difference.
8. **Evaluate implementation and outcome.** Programs must invest in monitoring to find out if they are making a difference.

The conclusions that can be drawn from the Chicago study are:

- Invest in early childhood programs because they are among the most effective preventive interventions. Evidence of cost-benefit analysis suggests the long-term payoff of such approaches. Remedial interventions, including class-size reduction or retention in grade, can be effective, but the best evidence shows that none has the substantial benefits of good quality preschools.
- Consider both length of program participation and timing when designing programs. We need to increase access at younger ages, but if intervention is not at the appropriate dosage level, it won't

make a difference. We have to combine length of intervention with timing.

- Implement intensive parent programs through staffed parent-resource rooms with emphasis on personal development and school participation.
- Focus enrichment on school readiness, especially language and literacy skills through relatively structured, activity-based approaches.
- Focus school-age programs on school organization and instructional resources through such elements as instructional coordination and reduced class size and child-teacher ratios.
- Study the strengths and limitations of universal access to early care and education programs. Quality and effectiveness will depend on success in coordinating services, recruiting and keeping well-trained staff, and tailoring services to the needs of families.

In summary, the Chicago study makes it clear that preschool programs should be a part of the continuum of experiences for children. Looking at the Child-Parent Centers gives us a model for organizing and funding an early childhood education system that has proven highly effective in making a difference in children's lives.

QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION

Q. What are the typical gains in literacy for children in the Child-Parent Centers?

- A. Children enter kindergarten with a four- or five-month performance gain in literacy and math skills. That level of gain would not be as significant if it were at the 10th grade, but that is a substantial difference for this age group.

Q. During the 17 years of the study, were there significant changes in the operation of the Centers?

- A. There were some changes over time. For example, the funding structure changed in the mid-70s. In the beginning, Title I funding was used – but the children showed so much progress

that the schools became ineligible for Title I funding! That received quite a bit of press attention at the time. In the end, the school-age part of the program became state funded. Another change was less parent involvement once welfare reform required parents to work. In addition, the Centers transitioned to all-day programs to be more competitive with the emerging other choices that parents have. Also, the education component has gotten stronger because we have a lot more understanding of how to teach literacy.

Q. How can you be sure that the outcomes are not related to self-selection by families whose children would do better anyway because of family support or interest?

A. The study has looked carefully at this question for the past 10 years. Participation is limited to families living in Title I areas, so geographic location determines who is eligible. The Centers do extensive community outreach, advertisements in local newspapers, going door to door and doing other things to make sure they reach the children at greatest risk. In the mid-80s, there were really no other early childhood choices, so there was almost complete saturation of participation. More than 80 percent of eligible children went to centers. Also, the comparison group had families interested enough to send them to an all-day kindergarten, which was unusual in the mid-80s, so the comparative findings are probably conservative with regards to self-selection.

Q. What impact did you find on second-language students?

A. The Latino population has increased dramatically in the past five years, but in the mid-80s when the study sample was selected, most of the students were African-American. But the same pattern holds true when looking at the effects on child development; there is no difference for Latinos in the study. But rates of parent participation are lower in Latino families. We need to look at what special issues there are in providing services to this population.

Q. One issue for Latino parents is why schools should get involved in their lives at such an early age. What should be done to address that issue?

A. Typically, the persuasion process has been harder for Latino families. We are still trying to understand all of these issues. Maybe we need to provide more options, more home visitations. Perhaps it is partly an issue of how schools should interact with families. The availability of care and the welfare reform work requirements are raising the level of interest for all families.

Q. Are there opportunities to tie adult education into this system?

A. The Centers now have a two-generational focus. Parents are seen as critical to the effectiveness of the program. The parent rooms sponsor night courses, GED classes and other opportunities. Many of the parents have not had successful educational experiences themselves. We have seen increases in the educational attainment level among parents who participate in the program, so that is a benefit and provides a good role model for the children.

Q. In California, we have a large transiency factor. Is that an issue that shows up in the study or does the program offer some holding power to keep students in place?

A. Seventy-five percent of the total sample have changed schools at least once. But because of the continuity between the preschool program and the elementary school, they are less likely to change schools and less likely to experience residential changes later. Looking at the total environment, the Centers provide a more stable learning environment and reduce later school mobility – but they certainly don't prevent transiency completely.

PRESENTATION OF PANELISTS

PAMELA SHORT-POWELL

Pamela Short-Powell is the assistant superintendent for schools, curriculum and instruction for the Pasadena Unified School District. She is responsible for the design, delivery and implementation of curriculum and instructional programs. She also serves on the School Readiness Committee that is working with the State Legislature Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education, PreK-University. She has received the California Distinguished School Principal's Award, NAACP Distinguished Educator and Community Service Award, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Woman of the Year Award, Pasadena Links Educator's Award and the Pasadena Journal Educator's Award, among others.

This presentation will describe some of the things we are doing in Pasadena that are similar to the Chicago program, as well as some policy recommendations about school readiness.

In 1989, Pasadena established 24 early childhood programs (ECPs) housed on elementary school campuses. As in the Chicago program, the school principal is in charge of the ECP and oversees the operation, supervision and monitoring of staff, curriculum, parent education and parent participation, and the budget. The Pasadena ECPs use a referral system to assist and link families with community services, including physical and mental health agencies and social services programs.

The Pasadena programs contract with an outside agency to conduct a formal evaluation to determine program effectiveness. The evaluation is essential in terms of funding and to monitor improvements. The evaluation includes a longitudinal look at test data, attendance patterns, referrals to special education, referrals to guidance counselors and agencies, parent involvement and other factors that contribute to positive outcomes. Pasadena's biggest challenge is how to sustain parent involvement as students leave the ECP and move on to the primary and elementary grades. The data indicate that parents are heavily involved in the early years but their involvement decreases by the third grade.

There is a strong commitment at the school level, which is supported at the district level, to use a team teacher model and to provide professional development and collegial dialogue to ensure articulation of all programs. We try to build smooth transitions into every point: from leaving home and entering preschool, to leaving preschool and entering kindergarten, etc. We have found this to be successful in sustaining programs, collecting data and ensuring successful school experiences for our students.

Pasadena employs an ECP community liaison at the district level, but does not fund this position at the school site level. Each individual school has a liaison to serve all students. Most students come from a Latino culture and the community liaison usually has grassroots experience from that community.

The ECPs offer a strong comprehensive curriculum that is linked to the elementary school program. Embedded within the framework, the teachers can use a variety of programs to help youngsters acquire basic skills in oral language, numbers and social skills.

Several years ago, each ECP had a Parent Resource Room, but when class-size reduction occurred ECPs lost space because there was a need for more classrooms for K-3. Currently, we have one parent resource center, which is housed at the district office. The staff at the Parent Resource Center implements several of the parent education programs at the school sites.

Teachers are required to do home visits. Substitutes are provided and teachers are given release time to go to homes four times a year. Because of violence in our neighborhoods, they go in pairs.

Turning to recommendations for early childhood policy, these include:

- **Comprehensive, ongoing professional development.** We need to have various levels of professional development that are suitable for both beginning and veteran teachers. Professional development cannot simply be a one-year program; it needs to be an ongoing, integrated effort. Teachers need to be compensated for participating outside of their work day.

Summer professional development programs are ideal so that teachers are not tired or occupied with other things that occur during the school year. ECP teachers need to participate alongside primary teachers so that we begin to build a community of learners and provide continuity.

- **High-quality preschool teachers.** ECP staff need to have bachelor's degrees and be credentialed teachers. The respect is simply not there if they do not have their credentials. We need to increase their pay so that we can retain them. Right now, the compensation level of preschool teachers is about half that of kindergarten teachers, yet they work just as hard. This disparity causes problems.
- **Diversity.** Teachers need training that allows them to successfully meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds.
- **Special education.** More than 12 percent of Pasadena's students receive special education services. We need to make room in preschool programs through an inclusive model and compensate the district for those services. Early testing is very critical for the identification of children with special needs. This allows early intervention and more success for the programs and the students.
- **Dual language training.** We need programs that offer "dual-language" learning for students and teachers.
- **Full-day kindergarten.** Implementing a full-day kindergarten will help children with the transition to the primary grades.
- **Wrap-around services.** For families that need preschool in the morning and childcare in the afternoon, wrap-around services should be provided.

Several of these recommendations will be included when the state's Master Plan component that concerns school readiness is released.


CRYSTAL KOCHENDORFER

Crystal Kochendorfer has served three terms as president of the Capistrano Unified School District Board, as well as two terms as president of the Capistrano Laguna Beach Regional Occupational Program Board. She is vice chair of the Children and Families Commission of Orange County. She is also a member of the School Readiness Committee working with the California State Legislature Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education, K-University. A former classroom and mentor teacher, Kochendorfer's awards include the 1998 Marian Bergeson Award from the Orange County School Boards Association, the PTA Honorary Service Award, the Association of California School Administrators Legislative Action Award, and the 2001 Woman of Distinction in Education Award from the Soroptimists International of Capistrano Bay.

This is the story of one county's efforts to address school readiness with the assistance of Proposition 10 funds. Proposition 10 is the initiative passed by voters in 1998 that increased tobacco taxes to provide each county with funds that can be used to support education, health and childcare programs. The focus is on promoting early childhood development for children from zero to age 5.

With 500,000 students served by 567 schools, Orange County faces many challenges. First, the schools are overcrowded. Second, Orange County has its share of low-performing schools, with 13 school districts having 82 elementary schools that are in the bottom three deciles on the Academic Performance Index. And third, we have high-poverty areas throughout the county. About 40 percent of the school population qualify for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program.

While the Children and Families Commission of Orange County has initiated the development of new programs to address the early physical, developmental, mental and oral health needs of our youngest children, today I will focus on the Commission's investments in school readiness with our school districts. The Commission is focusing on school readiness programs that are attached to or linked to schools and are more than just pre-school academic programs.



The Commission began its work with local school districts by inviting school districts to participate in defining and developing community-based school readiness programs. We offered to fund school readiness coordinators at the 26 elementary school districts serving our kindergarten population. These coordinators were selected by the school districts and became their employees. The Commission made a commitment of sustained annual funding of about \$2 million for at least five years.

Additionally, we funded capacity-building grants at school districts, allowing them to create new and innovative programs to meet the needs of children and their families. The Commission also hired its own school readiness coordinator who provides leadership, technical support and opportunities for networking to the school district readiness coordinators.

When the state Children and Families Commission offered \$200 million statewide to partner with county commissions on school readiness programs, the Orange County Commission was the first Commission to apply and to be approved for a grant. We were positioned to take advantage of this opportunity because we already had school readiness coordinators in place. This allowed the implementation of school readiness programs at 19 schools serving more than 2,000 children. These schools typically have 90 to 100 percent students who were qualify for free or reduced-price lunches and two-thirds students who are English language learners.

Because of lack of space and overcrowding in schools, the Orange County commission also encouraged schools to think outside the box and design school-linked, rather than school-based, programs. Some

of the results included an expanded preschool program at the Boys and Girls Club of Garden Grove; a preschool program at the Warwick Apartment complex in Santa Ana that serves 225 children between birth and age 5; an evening preschool program to serve children on the Head Start waiting list in Anaheim; and preschool and parent education programs serving the surrounding community within walking distance of and adjacent to school sites in San Clemente and Huntington Beach.

Based on the Commission's work, there are several key recommendations:

- School readiness programs preparing children for kindergarten should model successful college efforts to work with high schools on better student preparation. These efforts were developed when the state university system wanted to reduce its remediation costs for incoming freshmen who were poorly prepared for college-level English and math classes. Similarly, there is a need to bridge the communication gap between the K-12 system and the pre-kindergarten community. The K-12 system needs to reach out to and connect with the early care and education community so that children are not only ready for school, but schools are better prepared to receive children.
- Although improving the readiness of children for school is a matter of statewide concern, it is important to have county programs developed that address local community needs and coordinate available resources.
- Programs need to incorporate best practices and be focused on outcomes.

MARIA L. CHAVEZ

Maria Chavez is senior director of the Migrant Education Program, Region IX, San Diego County Office of Education. In this capacity, she oversees service contracts with 47 school districts throughout San Diego and Orange counties that are responsible for services to more than 15,000 migrant students and their families. She has had extensive experience in migrant and bilingual education issues as both a classroom teacher and school principal at the elementary, middle school and alternative high school levels.

The Migrant Education Program is a special federal categorically funded program administered through the state. The Region IX program covers 15,500 students in San Diego and Orange counties, meeting their needs from age 3 to 22 or graduation from high school. The goal of the program is to graduate students from high school, giving them whatever opportunities and services are required to achieve that goal. They also are exposed to higher education opportunities.

It's very important that children be ready for kindergarten. One of the signs that we are making progress is that the children who receive services from the Migrant Education Program don't cry on the first day of kindergarten – they know what it is about and they look forward to it. Our region has 46 migrant service aides who follow a case management model that begins with a home visit. They assess all of the services that are needed within the home, looking at the whole family and the circumstances under which they are living.

Next to the San Francisco Bay Area, these parts of the state are the most expensive to live in. Most of the migrant families make minimum wage and the mother stays home with the children. It is not uncommon for families to share houses, or for a one-bedroom apartment to be home for three families.

We go into these homes to teach both the child and the parents. The goal of preschool is not only to provide services to the child, but also to provide access to services for the entire family. If the family is not interested or is fearful of the government authority that school represents, then we start slowly with an in-home program. The whole goal is to get children excited about school and learning.

The Migrant Education Program provides many links between home and school. It can provide classroom supplies, uniforms, whatever is needed. Health screening and follow-up care are also provided.

One drawback to ensuring there is adequate access to preschool services is the lack of space in many of these communities. Two years ago, our office wrote grant requests for four preschool programs and all were funded. But two of the districts could not find the space to operate the programs. The children with the need were there; the funding was there; but there was no space.

Another observation is that programs can have the best curriculum and the best setting, but a child will not be able to learn if his needs are not being met. Our migrant staff is very experienced. They don't have credentials or degrees, but they are experts and they have a referral system, partnerships and friends all over who can connect children with the needed services.

As the numbers of migrant children grow, programs like this become more and more important. Two years ago, we served 13,000 and today it is more than 15,000. A program like ours that can identify the strengths and needs of families is an important factor in helping these children move to the next level of achievement.

DAVID W. GORDON

David W. Gordon is superintendent of the Elk Grove Unified School District. The district has 50,000 students in 45 schools, covers 320 square miles in Sacramento County, and has an annual budget of \$325 million. One of the fastest growing districts in the nation, Elk Grove is expected to grow to 80,000 students by 2010. Gordon began his career as an elementary school teacher and also worked for the California Department of Education for 17 years. He has served as an Associate in Education at Harvard, a visiting scholar at Stanford and a visiting professor at the University of California, Riverside. He was recently appointed to President Bush's Commission on Excellence in Special Education. He has served on numerous commissions, including the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the California Curriculum Development Commission.

The presentations today have demonstrated the importance of leadership in the whole field of early childhood education. The things that are happening that have been reported here are sparked by effective leadership. And at the state level, we know that type of leadership is coming together in the Legislature's work on the new Master Plan for education. The early childhood education world and the public school world often do not get along well, so the work that is being done on the Master Plan regarding early childhood education is a very important step in getting a very crucial conversation going in this state.

Dr. Reynolds is very clear in saying that an investment in early childhood education pays off in a big way. The data we have gathered in our district on the success of preschool children mirrors what he has talked about. Our district is often perceived as middle class and suburban, but many of our children live in poverty and many of our schools are eligible for Title I assistance.

Elk Grove runs a wrap-around program, providing health services through Healthy Start, many after-school programs and preschool services. We only serve 500 in the preschools and we should be serving 3,000, just based on the number of low-income families. Elk Grove has received Proposition 10 funding to buy two portables that will expand our capacity, but we should be doing far, far more.

Some of the things that Elk Grove is doing that are noteworthy:

- We have eliminated fiefdoms and turf battles by having Title I funding resources used across special education, preschools and schools.
- We link our pre-school curriculum, standards and benchmarks with elementary school measurements, so that assessments are aligned and so that preschool learning is focused on kindergarten readiness.
- We expect our preschool teachers to be fully credentialed because teacher quality pays off in a big way.
- Early intervention is used to avoid later special education costs. In Elk Grove eight or nine years ago, 16 percent of the students were receiving special education services. Today that is down to 9 percent because we start intervention early, especially for literacy problems.

Two final points are important. First, the notion of central leadership for education is crucial. One of the things we have struggled with is that Head Start is free standing. That means we spend a lot of time in meetings about governance and coordination. We need a single point of management and governance for a child's education. Second, leadership from teachers is also crucial for effective early childhood education that integrates multi-faceted services. If we can work closely with teachers, show them exactly what is in the Reynolds study – that if children have a healthy, enriched start that it will pay off and make their jobs easier – then teachers will buy in to the concept and support it.

FINAL QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION

Q. How can Elk Grove School District pay for fully credentialed preschool teachers?

Gordon: We looked at what Title I and Head Start funds were being used for and realized that they were not doing big things. So we redirected them toward funding credentialed teachers, as well as reducing class size to 24-to-1 in grades four through six, by reconfiguring the funding in Title I schools. We didn't want to have second-class teachers at a campus because that is divisive.

Reynolds: The percentage of Title I funding that goes to preschool programs is only about 2 percent of the total. The federal government is aware of that and is advocating that schools spend more on preschool programs.

Q. Class-size reduction is very popular but the benefits have not been that tremendous. Is there an opportunity to convince parents and others that we need to rethink class-size reduction and put resources into alternatives like early childhood education instead?

Gordon: In Elk Grove, we are planning to reduce grades 4-6 class sizes in our non-Title 1 schools as well. Part of the reason that class-size reduction does not show the best results is that it requires teacher training so that teachers can take advantage of the smaller group size. Personally, I think there is more benefit to class-size reduction, but many teachers have just never received appropriate training. The benefits are immediate and tangible to the parent and their appetites have been whetted by the K-3 reduction. And teachers strongly support class-size reduction. We have to pay close attention to things like class-size reduction as a way of retaining teachers.

Reynolds: Class-size reduction has the biggest impact when it starts early in kindergarten, the children are from low-income families and it stays stable for several years.

Kochendorfer: If you have good leaders who can educate and inform the public, and you do not try to do it overnight, then you can bring the public along with you. You do not say, "End class-size reduction and do early childhood education instead." You can start small, base funding on successes and then begin replicating programs.

Short-Powell: Program evaluation is very necessary. We have not really looked at class-size reduction with a longitudinal study, or when teachers have participated in appropriate professional development. It is important that once class size has been reduced, teachers are trained to take advantage of the smaller size.

Q. We have talked about an early childhood education structure that works. Are there structures that should be avoided because they don't work?

Reynolds: There was a controversial program called Comprehensive Child Development Program that worked on a case management model. What they found in implementation was that it had virtually no impact in parent participation, school readiness, literacy and language development. It doesn't mean that the case management model would not work. But if you don't implement such a model well, with good coordination across all service providers and follow up to make sure services are appropriate, then these programs do not seem to have as much potential for providing benefits.

Chavez: Any project that does not work directly with the school or does not have a strong link to schools should be avoided.

Gordon: One corollary to that is that health screening, if not health services, should be delivered at the school. You can avoid a lot of special education services and other remediation if children are given appropriate early health services. Preschool programs need to be closely connected to kindergarten programs. Stand-alone preschools will never be able to do a quality job of preparing children for learning and reading readiness unless they are closely linked to kindergarten instruction.

CONCLUSION

Research makes it clear that an investment in early childhood education makes a difference in the success of children, both academically and socially. When that investment is characterized by several key elements – including strong linkage to schools, emphasis on parent involvement and a focus on literacy development – the dividends can far outweigh the costs. The Chicago Longitudinal Study cites a multitude of positive outcomes, including higher levels of school readiness, higher school achievement test scores, less need for remedial services, lower rates of child abuse, fewer juvenile arrests and higher rates of high school completion. The total return on a well-constructed preschool experience is \$7 for every \$1 invested, with almost \$4 of the savings in public dollars.

On the frontlines in California, there is ample evidence that educators and community leaders have already taken the importance of early childhood education to heart. Spurred by Proposition 10 funds, counties are moving forward with school readiness initiatives. School districts are integrating preschools into their offerings. And migrant children are receiving a wide variety of services to help them be ready for school.

Several key points emerged in the presentations and discussions:

- The payoff for early childhood education is large compared to other initiatives, such as class-size reduction. One large challenge will be to find a balance between the many options for investments: class-size reduction, professional development, improved accountability and preschool programs.
- Space is an important consideration. Children may have needs and school districts may be able to find funding, but if there is no space, quality programs have difficulty moving forward.
- If there is not a close linkage between schools and early childhood education, then the payoff in terms of how well children do will be significantly less.

As one speaker noted, properly constructed early childhood education needs to be a high priority. If children are not exposed to early learning and literacy, if they don't have the proper medical care and if there isn't parent involvement, then a child's success will be less likely no matter what other education reform initiatives are implemented.

SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

Naomi Alli

Legislative Assistant
Office of Assemblymember Alan Lowenthal
State Capitol, Room 4146
Sacramento, CA 95814

Janice Auld

California Teachers Association
5883 Devon Drive
Rocklin, CA 95765

Kathy Beasley

The Write Connection
1000 Sagamore Way
Sacramento, CA 95822

Linda Bond

Director, Office of Governmental Relations
California Commission on Teacher
Credentialing
1900 Capitol Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95814

Maria Chavez

Senior Director, Migrant Education
San Diego County Office of Education
6401 Linda Vista Road
San Diego, CA 92111-7399

Kathleen Chavira, Consultant

Senate Education Committee
State Capitol, Room 2083
Sacramento, CA 95814

Marilyn Errett

Office of Governmental Relations
California Commission on Teacher
Credentialing
1900 Capitol Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95814

Leslie Fausset

Chief Deputy Superintendent
Policy and Programs
California Department of Education
721 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814

Teresa Garcia

Office of the Secretary for Education
1121 L Street, Suite 600
Sacramento, CA 95814

Lisa Giroux

Consultant
Office of Senator Dede Alpert
State Capitol, Room 5050
Sacramento, CA 95814

David W. Gordon

Superintendent
Elk Grove Unified School District
9510 Elk Grove-Florin Road
Elk Grove, CA 95624

Sandra Gutierrez

Commissioner
California Children & Families Commission
501 J Street, Suite 530
Sacramento, CA 95814

Gary K. Hart

Founder
CSU Institute for Education Reform
6000 J Street, Foley Hall
Sacramento, CA 95819-6018

Jane Henderson

California Children & Families Commission
501 J Street, Suite 530
Sacramento, CA 95814

Patti Huston

Chief, Governmental Relation
California Children & Families Commission
501 J Street, Suite 530
Sacramento, CA 95814

Michael Jett

Director, Child Development Division
California Department of Education
721 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814

Crystal Kochendorfer

Capistrano USD School Board of Trustees
and Orange Co. Children & Families
Commission
32562 Adriatic Drive
Dana Point, CA 92629

Susan Little

Senior Consultant
Office of Assemblymember Fran Pavley
State Capitol, Room 5144
Sacramento, CA 95814

Constance Lue

Director, Child Development Programs and
Extended Learning Opportunities
Glendale Unified School District
233 N. Jackson Street, Room 211
Glendale, CA 91206

Kathy Malaske-Samu

Chair, Child Development Policy Advisory
Committee
222 S. Hill Street, 5th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Jeannine Martineau

President-elect
California School Boards Assoc.
3100 Bacon Blvd.
West Sacramento, CA 95691

Anne McKinney

Consultant, Joint Committee to Develop a
Master Plan for Education — K-University
1020 N Street, Suite 600
Sacramento, CA 95814

Emily Nahat

Deputy Director, Program Mgmt. Division,
California Children & Families Commission
501 J Street, Suite 530
Sacramento, CA 95814

Patricia Nourot

Professor, Sonoma State University,
School of Education #3029
1801 E. Cotati Avenue
Rohnert Park, CA 94938-3609

Shirley Peace

California Teachers Association
4838 Beech Street
San Diego, CA 92102

Roberta Peck

Administrator
School Readiness Partnership Unit
California Children & Families Commission
501 J Street, Suite 530
Sacramento, CA 95814

Pamela Powell

Asst. Superintendent
Pasadena Unified School District
351 S. Hudson Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91109

Arthur J. Reynolds

Professor, College of Letters and Science
University of Wisconsin — Madison
1350 University Avenue, Bldg. 302
Madison, WI 53706

David Romain

Consultant
4558 Fran Way
Richmond, CA 94803

Veronica Santelices

PACE
UC Berkeley — School of Education
Tolman Hall 3659
Berkeley, CA 94720

Aimee Scribner

Consultant
Assembly Education Committee
State Capitol, Room 3123
Sacramento, CA 95814

Rick Simpson

Policy Director
Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
State Capitol, Room 319
Sacramento, CA 95814

Patricia Skelton

Research Evaluator
California Children & Families Commission
501 J Street, Suite 530
Sacramento, CA 95814

Giovanna Stark

Government Action and Communication
4535 Shady Oak Way
Fair Oaks, CA 95628

Glen Thomas

Executive Director
California County Superintendents
925 L Street, #1400
Sacramento, CA 95814

Tracy Tomasky

Board Member, San Juan USD
California Head Start Association
5309 Kenneth Avenue
Carmichael, CA 95608

Dan Walden

President
California School Boards Assoc.
3100 Bacon Blvd.
West Sacramento, CA 95691

Patricia Wheatley

Executive Director
Santa Barbara Children & Families
Commission
105 E. Anapamu Street, #403
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Jim Wilson

Consultant
Senate Education Committee
State Capitol, Room 2083
Sacramento, CA 95814

Megan Wong

Legislative Aide
Office of Assemblymember Wilma Chan
State Capitol, Room 4098
Sacramento, CA 95814

Carolyn Wylie

Executive Director, Riverside County CFC/
Riverside County Office of Education
2020 Iowa Avenue, #101
Riverside, CA 92507

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The CSU Institute for Education Reform

California State University, Sacramento

6000 J Street

Sacramento, California 95819-6018

(916) 278-4600