



Anne E. Campbell • County Superintendent of Schools

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **San Mateo County Recognized for Efforts to Improve Early Childhood Education**

REDWOOD CITY, CALIF. In its report released yesterday, the [Learning Policy Institute](#) identified several of San Mateo County's efforts to improve early childhood education (ECE) as model practices for the state. The report, [Building an Early Learning System That Works: Next Steps for California](#), describes both challenges and promising practices and provides recommendations for improving access to high-quality ECE. According to the report, San Mateo County has "successfully worked to streamline processes for families and providers, maximize resources, and develop a more coherent vision of ECE."

The report cites research demonstrating that access to "high-quality early learning opportunities support children's school readiness, promote later life success, and yield a return of up to \$7 for every \$1 invested." Yet, only 33 percent of the one million children in the state who qualify for subsidized ECE receive it. That number drops to 14 percent for infants and toddlers. In San Mateo County, 43 percent of children ages 0-12 who qualify for subsidized ECE receive it. That includes 66 percent of preschool children, but only 13 percent of infants and toddlers.

The report identifies several challenges to providing high quality childcare, including a lack of system and program coordination, low reimbursement rates for providers, complicated enrollment processes, a lack of full-day programs, and low compensation for providers. Many providers also lack access to support for training and program quality improvement.

The report also provides a series of recommendations in four categories to address these challenges. Although the report calls for a state-wide framework for ECE, San Mateo County has embarked on promising practices that may serve as a model for other counties.

- **Build a coherent ECE administration system.**

In San Mateo County, interagency collaboration is a priority and has led to a more cohesive local vision of quality ECE. Joint work on ambitious initiatives, such as The Big Lift, facilities expansion, and ECE quality improvement has contributed to and strengthened relationships among agencies.

- **Make ECE affordable for all children up to age five.**

The county's Big Lift program was highlighted as a bold effort to expand access to preschool and increase the quality of preschool programs through coaching, professional development, and other services. However, the report notes that a lack of stable funding for The Big Lift could hinder its efforts to reach more children.

- **Build a well-qualified ECE workforce.**

San Mateo County embarked on a pilot with other Bay Area counties to raise the income eligibility threshold for participation in ECE programs, increase the reimbursement rate for providers, and provide more flexibility in moving funds among programs. The results have been positive: the county

has retained 20 out of 22 participating contractors and achieved a 50 percent reduction in funds relinquished to the state since it launched the pilot in 2004. The report also cites the contributions of the San Mateo Community College District in strengthening the ECE workforce.

- **Improve the quality of all ECE programs.**

*Quality Counts*, a collaborative supporting the CA-QRIS (Quality Rating and Improvement System) in over 100 San Mateo County child care centers and family child care homes, is growing and covering more providers. The effort is designed to assess and raise quality while offering training, coaching and incentives for all participants. Data is collected to inform and refine a system of continuous quality improvement.

“The Learning Policy Institute’s report provides a very thorough and thoughtful review of the challenges and promising practices for expanding access to early childhood education in both the county and the state,” explained San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools Anne E. Campbell. “While we are heartened to see San Mateo County as a model for the state, we must continue to make early childhood education a priority as it is the foundation for success in school and later life. With the Institute’s report, we now have a roadmap to help us achieve quality early childhood education for all of our children, and not just those whose families can afford it.”

The Learning Policy Institute conducts and communicates independent, high-quality research to improve education policy and practice. Working with policymakers, researchers, educators, community groups, and others, the Institute seeks to advance evidence-based policies that support empowering and equitable learning for each and every child. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, the Institute connects policymakers and stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels with the evidence, ideas, and actions needed to strengthen the education system from preschool through college and career readiness.

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The San Mateo County Office of Education is committed to ensuring excellence and equity in education by inspiring students, investing in teachers, invigorating leaders, and involving communities.