



California Budget  
& Policy Center

# Envisioning Comprehensive Public Investment in Early Childhood Education and Well-Being

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# Overview

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- Early childhood is an important period for development and intervention.
- Investments in early child development have large payoffs.
- Other kinds of interventions can also improve young children's outcomes, including income supports, nutrition support, home visiting, early child care, and neighborhood quality.
- A number of recent proposals and initiatives have advocated for investing in California's young children.



# Early childhood represents a key window for development

- The majority of brain development takes place from the prenatal period to age 3. Brain development continues through the rest of early childhood and into the teenage years.
- Both biology and lived experience in early childhood influence how brains develop, how genes are expressed, and what capabilities children develop.

(Neurons to Neighborhoods 2000)



# Large disparities in children's skills and knowledge are already present before entrance to kindergarten

- The reading achievement gap between low-income and high-income children is already large at school entrance, and changes little as children progress through school.

(Reardon, 2013)



**Investments in early  
childhood education reduce  
disparities and improve long-  
term outcomes**



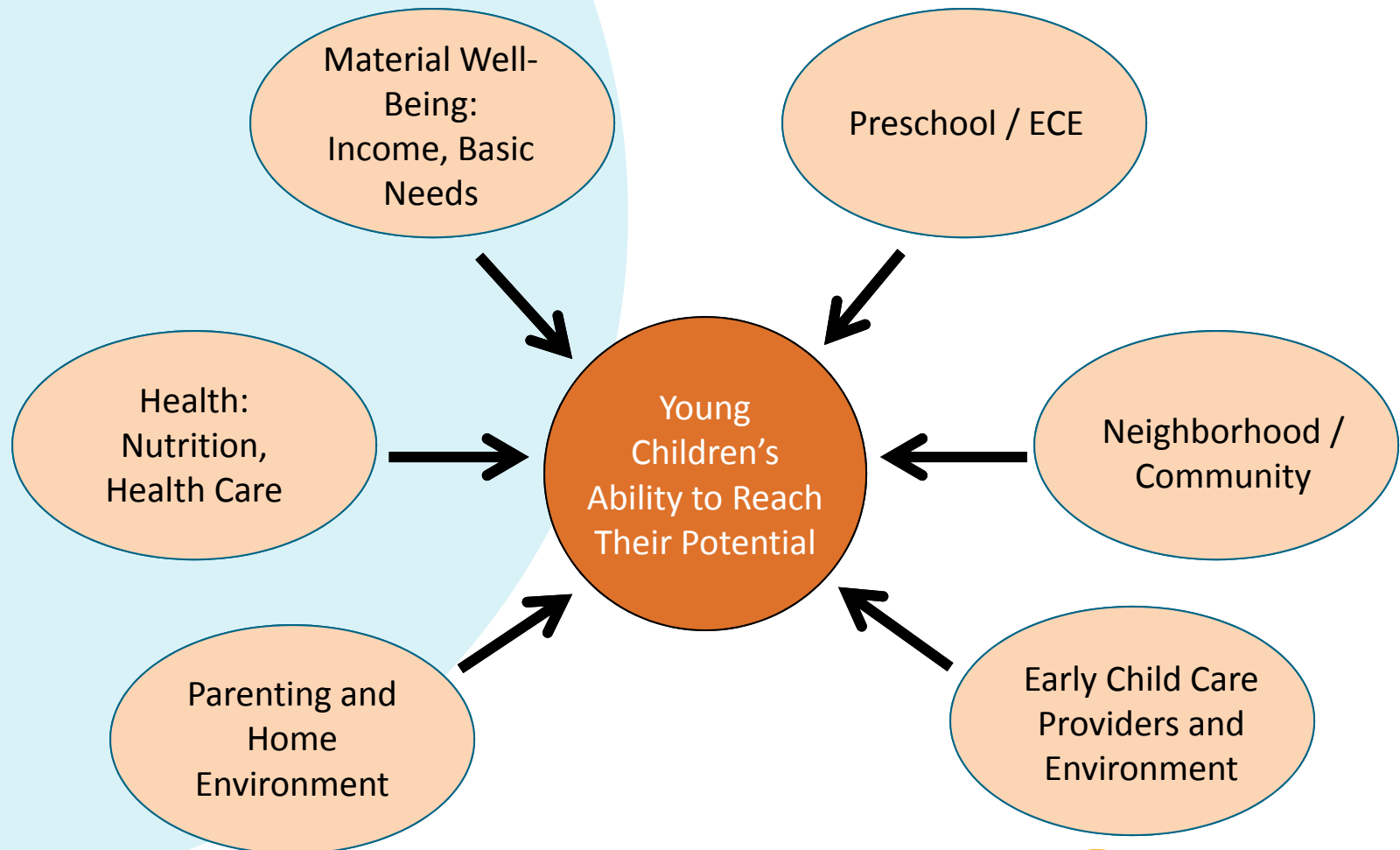
# Evidence for impact of preschool

- On average, children attending preschool gain about a third of a year of additional learning in language, reading, and math.
- Long-term benefits are evident even after test score differences disappear.
- Quality preschool is cost-effective, with long-term financial benefits of \$3 to \$7 for every \$1 spent.

(Foundation for Child Development, 2013)



# Many Factors Influence Children's Ability to Reach Their Potential



**Investments in other supports  
for young children also  
reduce disparities and  
improve long-term outcomes**





# Evidence for income support

- Larger EITC payments are associated with fewer low-weight and premature births.
- An additional \$3,730 a year (in \$2017) in family income before age 6 is associated with improved school achievement equivalent to additional 2 months of schooling and a 17% increase in annual earnings as an adult, on average.

(CBPP, 2015)



# Evidence for nutrition support

- Receipt of food stamps during pregnancy reduces low birth-weight by 5 to 23%.
- Access to food stamps during the prenatal and early childhood periods is associated with a 16% reduction in the risk of obesity as an adult and an 18% increase in the likelihood of completing high school.

(White House CEA, 2015)



# Evidence for home visiting

High-quality home visiting programs are associated with improved outcomes in child health, child development and school readiness, child maltreatment, positive parenting, and family self-sufficiency.

(OPRE, 2014)

Nurse Family Partnership program is associated with long-term benefits to participants and society of more than \$24,000 per participant (in \$2017).

(NFP, 2014)



# Evidence for quality infant/toddler child care

- High-quality infant and toddler child care is linked to improved early cognitive and language outcomes.
- Benefits are particularly strong for children from the most disadvantaged home environments.

(Zero to Three, 2009)



# Evidence for neighborhood quality

For children younger than 13, moving from a high-poverty neighborhood to a low-poverty neighborhood was associated with a 31% increase in earnings as an adult, on average.

(Chetty et al., 2015)



**A number of recent proposals  
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# Right Start Commission

## Rebuilding the California Dream

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- Simplify and enable **universal access to early learning and care** for 0-5 year olds.
- Invest in **preventive health care** for young children.
- Support **public awareness and family education** about the importance of the early years.
- Build a more **family-responsive business community**.



# Children Now

## Starting Now: A Policy Vision for Supporting the Healthy Growth and Development of Every California Baby

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- **Promote Healthy Children** through health care services, developmental screenings, nutrition support, child maltreatment services.
- **Foster Strong Families** through safety net programs and family income supports, home visiting programs, parental mental health screenings, and quality foster care services.
- **Enrich Early Learning** through parent and caregiver education, high-quality child care, child care quality improvement systems.
- **Strengthen Communities** through healthy environments, public parks, family-friendly community activities, addressing structural racism and segregation, reducing place-based disparities, and engaging communities in public decision-making.





# GRACE Inc.

## A Comprehensive Approach to Substantially Reduce Poverty in California

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- **Pre-Natal and Early Services:** Home visiting for children in poverty ages 0 to 5.
- **Early Childhood Education and Child Care:** Subsidized child care and state preschool programs for children in poverty ages 0 to 4 (also afterschool programs for older children).
- **Access to Effective Job Training Programs for Parents:** Job training and employer tax credit programs.
- **Cradle-to-College-and-Career Continuum in Promise Zones:** Comprehensive neighborhood-based services to transform schools and communities.
- **Immediate Assistance for Families:** Increased CalWORKs grants and state EITC.



# Children's Defense Fund

## Ending Child Poverty Now

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- Enact a **state EITC**.
- Raise the **state minimum wage**.
- Expand **child care slots** for low-income children.
- Make the **state tax credit for child & dependent care expenses** refundable.
- Increase **CalWORKs benefits** and eliminate the **Maximum Family Grant** rule.
- Fund **transportation** for low-income children.
- Integrate **CalFresh enrollment** with health care enrollment.
- Fund the **state housing trust fund** for affordable housing for extremely low-income families.



# California State Assembly

## Speaker's Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education

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- **Objective:** "A policy-driven body tasked with developing strategic solutions to improve outcomes for some of California's youngest learners and their families."
- **Topics:** Early brain development, increased access to ECE, eligibility standards in state child care and early education programs, provider reimbursement rate reform, universal early learning access, supporting California's growing workforce
- **Members:** Assemblymembers Garcia (Co-Chair), McCarty (Co-Chair), Ting, Rubio, Waldron, and Maienschein and nine community appointed Commissioners.



**These plans show momentum  
to address the needs of  
California's youngest  
children.**



# Research References

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[Neurons to Neighborhoods, 2000](#)

[Reardon, 2013](#)

[Foundation for Child Development, 2013](#)

[CBPP, 2015](#)

[White House CEA, 2015](#)

[OPRE, 2014](#)

[NFP, 2014](#)

[Zero to Three, 2009](#)

[Chetty et al., 2015](#)





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