

La Opinión

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It is Time for California to Finally Support and Train our Early Learning Teachers

By Patricia Lozano

The time is now for California's Early Learning teachers to receive the support and training they need in order to prepare our youngest learners for future success. My experience as a preschool teacher has taught me how gratifying yet extremely challenging it is to teach young children.

My first day on the job as a preschool teacher, I started my day with a prepared activity plan. I thought to myself:

"How hard can this be?" It took only ten minutes for me to realize the following:

a) teaching young children is incredibly difficult; b) the activities that I had planned for the day and my experience were not up to par, and c) I was probably not going to make it.

A couple of minutes later, the preschool director walked into my classroom and witnessed the chaos first hand.

From that moment moving forward, the preschool director worked with me and provided me the support and training I needed to succeed. I was fortunate enough to work at a preschool where teachers who held a BA, like myself, were valued, supported and fairly compensated. Together, with support and proper training, we grew into effective, high-quality teachers. The reality is that there is no standard teaching credential for the 120,000 Early Learning teachers living in California; this group of educators can have work experience that ranges anywhere from a high school diploma to a Bachelor's degree. Early Learning teachers often lack the financial means to participate in training opportunities, and California wages for Early Learning teachers are so low that almost 60% of them rely on public assistance.

A few months ago, Early Edge California hosted a National [Learning Tour](#) of high-quality Early Learning programs. During our time visiting programs in New Jersey, a teacher shared her story with us about how earning her BA changed her life: as a mother, as a woman and as a role model for her children. It was her struggle and work ethic that inspired her children to further their education and attend college themselves.



This is why Early Edge supports AB 123 by Kevin McCarty. The "Pre-K for all" bill will increase the salaries and the qualifications required for preschool teachers and will provide scholarships to help them obtain proper credentialing as well as additional support and training. This bill will also expand

access to California's preschool programs for every 4- year old living in a low- income community and every 3-year old living in poverty. It is that simple: every child should have access to high-quality Early Learning programs in their neighborhood. California must invest and place value on its Early Learning teachers so that they can offer the best learning environment for our young children. When teachers are given the opportunity to educate themselves and advance in their careers, their lives and the lives of their students can drastically change.

Patricia Lozano is executive director of Early Edge California, a nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to improving access to high-quality Early Learning experiences for all of California's kids so that they have a strong foundation for future success.