

Starting Smart and Strong

Starting Smart and Strong is our shared long-term commitment that every child in Fresno grows up healthy and ready for kindergarten.

Funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and made possible by partnerships throughout our Fresno community, Starting Smart and Strong empowers all adults to create healthy, nurturing, and engaging connections with children, so that our children are on track to reach their full potential in school and in life.



- Starting Smart and Strong is a 10-year initiative that supports three communities (Fresno, San Jose, and Oakland) in helping all the adults in children's lives access resources, coaching, and support to meet the needs of each child.
- Fresno is currently in our fifth year (2019-2020) of the initiative. Our two main goals to date are:
 - Improve professional development and training for caregivers and educators
 - Provide resources and support for parents, family, friends, neighbors, and other informal caregivers
- Fresno community partners participating/collaborating in the Starting Smart and Strong, include Central Valley Children's Services Network, Fresno Economic Opportunity Commission, Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, Fresno Housing Authority, and First 5 Fresno County.

How you can get involved: Starting Smart and Strong in Fresno is currently planning to design a website to support a community of practice. People interested in Starting Smart and Strong will have access to recorded professional development trainings, lesson plans, templates, graphics, and more. In the meantime, please contact **Deanna Mathies**, Executive Officer of Early Learning Department at Fresno Unified School, at 559.457-3687 or by email at Deanna.Mathies@fresnounified.org.

Starting Smart and Strong

Here's our progress to date:

Mission minded

the David
& Lucile Packard
FOUNDATION

STARTING SMART & STRONG
EMPOWERS ADULTS TO CREATE

 **HEALTHY**
 **NURTURING**
 **& ENGAGING**
CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS
WE START BY

**LEVELING THE
PLAYING FIELD**

OUR KIDS:

ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE

**COLLEGE &
CAREER READY**

Goal 1: Improve professional development and training for caregivers and educators

How: The Fresno Language Project was created with partner agencies to ensure all children have a strong early language foundation upon entering kindergarten. The project is implementing innovative practices—including Personalized Oral Language(s) Learning Strategies (POLLS), which are concrete approaches that support learning in all environments, and professional development trainings. POLLS was developed and written by Dr. Linda Espinosa, Early Learning Expert, who leads the trainings alongside co-author of Getting it RIGHT for Young Children from Diverse Backgrounds: Applying Research to Improve Practice, Elizabeth Magruder.

Specifically:

- All participating classrooms take part in a minimum of one coaching session and one classroom observation a month to support the implementation of POLLS.
- Educators of participating agencies administer surveys and share student data with independent evaluator Engage R+D to measure impact of professional development in their teaching practices and, ultimately, student development.

Community partners include:

- Fresno County Superintendent of Schools
- Central Valley Children's Services Network
- Fresno Economic Opportunity Commission
- Fresno Unified School District

Participants:

99 participants in the Fresno Language Project, including:

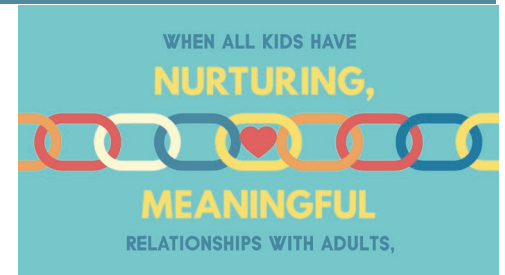
- 7 department/organization directors
- 11 early learning site supervisors/directors
- 22 coaches
- 59 teachers/assistants

Outcomes to date:

- Consistent increase in teachers' comfort level of using POLLS across all settings, from one-on-one time, to outdoor play, to math and science activities.
- Increase in teachers' comfort level of supporting dual language children in classroom/home.
- Increase in teachers' comfort level of meeting the language development needs of all children in classroom/home.
- Consistent increase of teachers encouraging parents/guardians to play music or sing songs, involve children in household chores, play games, create art, and build something to support their children's learning, health, and development.

Starting Smart and Strong

Here's our progress to date:



Goal 2: Provide resources and support for parents, family, friends, neighbors, and other informal caregivers

How: Developed by the Fresno Housing Authority and Fresno Unified School District with support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Helm Home-Play & Learn Center enhances the skills of parents, extended family, and other informal caregivers to improve the quality of adult-child interactions in all settings so that kids are on track for school and for life. This is supported through:

☐ **Play and Learn Groups:** provide children with an opportunity to explore dramatic play, music, literacy, sensory, art, and math activities. These activities improve children's cognitive, gross and fine motor skills, language and communication, and exploration skills as well as support social-emotional development.

☐ **Parents Workshops:** a variety of workshops for parents and informal caregivers, including Abriendo Puertas. Abriendo Puertas / Opening Doors is the nation's first evidence-based comprehensive training program developed by and for Latino parents with children ages 0-5. The workshops are intentionally designed to reinforce and validate the importance of parents' engagement in their children's lives.

Community partners include:

- ☐ Helm Home Play and Learn Center
- ☐ Central Valley Children's Services Network
- ☐ Fresno Housing Authority
- ☐ Fresno Unified School District
- ☐ Fresno County Superintendent of Schools

Participants:

- ☐ 167 parents and informal caregivers registered in the center
- ☐ 198 Children between ages of 6 weeks and 3 years

Outcomes to date:

- ☐ Caregivers refer to helm home as a "support network"
- ☐ Increased awareness of developmental milestones & supports needed
- ☐ Increased patience when managing children's behavior
- ☐ Participants recommend expanding program to serve others

Caregiver feedback:

- ☐ "It's the first time I'm seeing my son so excited to learn."
- ☐ "My daughter never sang before and now she knows three songs and sings in the car and house."
- ☐ "I like the opportunity to meet other moms and learn new activities together, like painting. Some parents don't have stuff like that at home."