



STRENGTHENING AND ADVANCING CALIFORNIA'S EARLY LEARNING WORKFORCE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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OUR VISION

All California children will have access to high-quality Early Learning programs starting at birth, with teachers who have the preparation, compensation, and support they need to do their jobs well.

A key component of a high-quality Early Learning system is developing a workforce that has the knowledge, skills, and support to provide high-quality care and instruction to young children. Since the publication of the 2015 seminal report, *Transforming the Workforce for Children from Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*,¹ momentum has been building both nationally and statewide to professionalize the Early Learning workforce. There is now a strong body of knowledge about what is needed to develop and retain well-prepared Early Learning teachers—yet, until now, California has not sufficiently invested in the infrastructure and resources needed to do so.²

Governor Newsom's administration has shown unprecedented commitment to working with the California Legislature to build a high-quality Early Learning system in California that meets the needs of our children and their families. Accomplishing this goal will require intentional planning and significant investment to strengthen and advance the more than 200,000 Early Learning teachers across the state.²

The Master Plan for Early Learning and Care—funded in the 2019-20 state budget and to be completed by October 2020—presents a key opportunity for California to develop a comprehensive roadmap to professionalize the state's Early Learning workforce.



In this policy paper, Early Edge California explores the serious challenges that California's Early Learning teachers currently face—**low pay, uneven professional requirements across programs, limited access to high-quality professional development opportunities and career pathways, and lack of ongoing workforce data to inform effective policy.**

We then make the following **recommendations for the Master Plan** to address these challenges and support the development of a highly-skilled Early Learning workforce statewide:

Recommendation 1: Develop a Cost Model and Long-Term Financing Plan for the Workforce

A critical component of the Master Plan's recommendations to advance the workforce will be a cost model analysis of having a well-qualified and fairly-compensated Early Learning workforce statewide and a long-term financing plan to ensure that adequate public funding is available to support such a workforce.

Recommendation 2: Increase Compensation and Strengthen Competency-Based Professional Requirements

The Master Plan should provide sequenced steps to simultaneously increase compensation, improve working conditions, and strengthen competency-based professional requirements for Early Learning teachers. Those steps should include:

- adopting regionalized salary schedules and workplace guidelines,
- ensuring that future reimbursement rate increases for the state's publicly-funded Early Learning programs equate to wage increases for the workforce,
- establishing a tiered reimbursement rate system that ties rates to research-based measures of quality,



- strengthening professional requirements across Early Learning programs to achieve the goal of pay parity for Early Learning and Transitional Kindergarten (TK)-3 teachers with comparable education and experience, and
- developing a multi-year strategy to create a competency-based preparation, assessment, and certification system for the incoming and current workforce.

Key to these efforts will be providing the field with sufficient financial assistance and comprehensive supports to promote equitable access to educational opportunities, building the capacity of California's higher education programs, and expanding career pathways for the workforce.

Recommendation 3: Establish a High-Quality, Coordinated System of Professional Development

The Master Plan should propose steps and funding to establish a comprehensive and centralized professional development system that is accessible to all segments of the workforce. This system should provide high-quality affordable resources, training, and college coursework that is competency-based, available in multiple languages, and offers viable career pathways. Developing a system of credit-bearing, stackable online courses that translate into progress towards degrees and certifications must be a priority. The Master Plan should also lay out how California can scale best practices in professional development—including on-the-job coaching, mentoring, communities of practice, and apprenticeship programs.

Recommendation 4: Ensure Future Collective Bargaining Agreements for Early Learning Professionals Include a Salary Structure and Quality Supports

Given the recent passage of legislation that establishes collective bargaining rights for California's

subsidized family childcare and Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers, the Master Plan should make recommendations for how a future collective bargaining agreement can incorporate higher compensation, incentivize quality, and increase access to high-quality training opportunities for these important segments of the workforce.

Recommendation 5: Develop a Comprehensive, Integrated Workforce Data System

To inform effective policy decisions and investment in our Early Learning workforce, the Master Plan should provide recommendations and funding to expand California's Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce Registry with the goal of developing a statewide system that collects ongoing data on the characteristics and needs of all Early Learning providers and teachers in the state's publicly-funded programs. The Cradle-to-Career Educational Data System funded in the 2019-20 state budget provides an opportunity to create a comprehensive longitudinal data system that integrates the Workforce Registry as well as program- and child-level data, starting at birth. The Master Plan should maximize this opportunity to build the infrastructure for such a system.

One of the greatest strengths of California's Early Learning workforce is that our teachers are racially and linguistically diverse—reflecting the children they serve.³ But women of color are disproportionately represented in the lowest-paying jobs and underrepresented in leadership roles.⁴ As the state advances workforce reforms and develops its Master Plan for Early Learning and Care, it must implement intentional strategies to promote equity and maintain diversity in the field.

Conclusion

Our recommendations provide a roadmap for California to lift up our Early Learning workforce, as well as the children and families throughout the state who rely on these teachers every day.



ENDNOTES

- ¹ Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, *Transforming the Workforce for Children from Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*, Washington, DC: National Academies Press (2015).
- ² Stipek, D., *Getting Down to Facts II: Early Childhood Education in California (Technical Report) (GDTFII). Strengthening California's Early Childhood Education Workforce* (Chapter 4) (2018); Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California at Berkeley (CSCCE), *The Early Childhood Workforce Index* (2018); CSCCE, *California's ECE Workforce: What We Know Now and the Data Deficit That Remains* (2018). Based on the most recently available data, there are approximately 120,000 paid members of California's Early Learning workforce. If license-exempt providers and self-employed family childcare providers are included, CSCCE estimates that the number would total 223,700.
- ³ According to 2012 data, 56% of center-based teachers, 74% of licensed home-based providers, and 80% of license-exempt home-based providers in California identified as non-white. CSCCE, *California's ECE Workforce: What We Know Now and the Data Deficit that Remains* (2018).
- ⁴ CSCCE, *The Early Childhood Workforce Index* (2018). Black and Latinx Early Learning teachers are more likely to earn lower wages than their white colleagues. In California, more than half of Black and Latinx center-based teachers earn less than \$15 an hour, whereas more than half of white center-based teachers earn more than \$15 an hour.

To get a full copy of our workforce policy paper, *Strengthening and Advancing California's Early Learning Workforce: Recommendations for the Master Plan*, visit earlyedgecalifornia.org.



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