



2025 POLICY AGENDA



[Early Edge California](#) is a statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to supporting children from under-resourced communities, with a special focus on babies, toddlers, and preschoolers, by advocating for accessible, high-quality Early Learning and Care (ELC) opportunities. Through targeted advocacy alongside policy development and implementation support, we promote culturally responsive, multilingual learning environments and professional advancement for teachers and trusted caregivers, aiming to accelerate community-wide economic mobility and resilience.

Now more than ever, given the current federal administration, it is crucial for California to continue to implement policies that safeguard and uplift communities from harmful federal actions. This includes prioritizing state ELC investments, supporting multilingual programs, and supporting culturally responsive and inclusive ELC spaces for Black and Brown children, children from mixed-status families, and children from communities that are under-resourced, along with their families and the workforce.

CONTENTS:

B-3 Child Care | 3
UPK Implementation | 4
Workforce | 5
DLLs | 6

PRIORITY AREAS

Early Edge’s 2025 policy agenda focuses on the most pressing issues for our youngest learners, their families, and the educators who care for them. Across each of the policy areas, it is essential for policymakers to center the communities that have historically and too often been left behind. Our organization will be working diligently to meet ambitious goals across the following areas:



**BIRTH TO THREE
(B-3) CHILD CARE**



**UNIVERSAL
PRESCHOOL (UPK)
IMPLEMENTATION**



**WORKFORCE
COMPENSATION,
SUPPORTS &
PATHWAYS**



**DUAL LANGUAGE
LEARNERS (DLLS)**



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BIRTH TO THREE (B-3) CHILD CARE

Increase access to high-quality, affordable infant and toddler care.

Expanding and increasing access to infant and toddler care addresses an urgent and critical shortage that families across California face.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Increase access to child care spaces by ensuring that the Governor’s commitment to fund 206,800 subsidized child care spaces by 2028 is carried out, with a priority given to infant and toddler care. Families across California struggle to access affordable high-quality care for their young children.¹ An estimated 36% of the state’s children, ages birth to 2 years, are eligible for subsidized care, yet only 14% are enrolled.² The unmet need is even greater for children of color. Efforts to increase the number of subsidized child care spaces can have tangible benefits for children and families.

Support student parents with young children. In California, approximately 400,000 undergraduate and graduate students are parents, with 32 percent parenting a child under 3.³ Their academic success and children’s well-being depend on strong institutional support. To improve graduation rates, higher education institutions must enhance basic needs services, especially child care resources, which are essential for student parent success. Comprehensive supports ensures colleges and universities uplift families through a two-generational approach.



Support efforts to increase and retain the availability of infant and toddler caregivers and educators. To expand ELC options for infants and toddlers, California must focus on increasing and retaining caregivers and educators. These professionals are essential to ensuring families seeking care can access it. However, the ELC workforce has reduced since the pandemic due to rising living costs, low wages, and limited benefits.⁴ Infant and toddler caregivers have experienced a 7.5% nationwide workforce decline, highlighting the need for immediate action.⁵ Lawmakers must prioritize policies that support the current workforce while attracting a new generation of educators to the field.



UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL (UPK) IMPLEMENTATION

Ensure that the implementation of universal preschool (UPK) is high-quality and incorporates developmentally appropriate practices across the mixed-delivery system.

By July 2025, California will have the largest UPK program in the nation available to all four-year-olds in the state, creating a unique opportunity to support children in their most formative years with high-quality programs.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Provide funding to lower Transitional Kindergarten (TK) classroom ratios to 10:1 as committed in the 2025-26 State Budget.

[Smaller class sizes](#) benefit young children and increase program quality for a number of reasons, including allowing stronger interactions and relationships between children and educators, and more dedicated attention and support.

Support expansion and participation in Family Child Care Home Education Networks (FCCHENs).

Family Child Care (FCC) settings are an essential part of the ELC mixed-delivery system, as they provide a home environment, often supporting bilingual language development and smaller adult-to-child ratios. However, FCCs are only able to participate in California's State Preschool Program (CSPP) when they are part of a FCCHEN. Increasing FCCHEN participation will allow more FCCs to participate in CSPP and receive the benefits and resources that are associated with participation.





WORKFORCE COMPENSATION, SUPPORTS & PATHWAYS

Implement reimbursement rate reform through an alternative methodology that reflects the true cost of care and ensures just, livable wages and essential benefits for the workforce. Provide supportive resources and professional development opportunities while addressing barriers to licensure and access to subsidies.

These efforts provide educators with the resources and supports they need, enabling the children in their care to thrive across all age groups and settings from birth through TK.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Advance reimbursement rate reform by implementing and funding the new reimbursement rate structure to ensure all providers, including license-exempt, receive rates reflecting the true cost of providing care, including livable wages, benefits, and professional development. The ELC workforce has been historically underpaid, often not earning a livable wage or receiving benefits, and requiring the support of [public assistance](#). As California continues rate reform discussions and collective bargaining with Child Care Providers United, it must ensure the system supports the workforce with a fair compensation structure and access to professional development.

Increase access to supports and resources for home-based providers, including Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) caregivers. Home-based providers are a vital part of the ELC ecosystem and workforce. FFN caregivers, in particular, are often an overlooked part of the workforce, but it is estimated that over half of children under 5 receive this type of care.⁶ Both FFNs and FCCs need resources to support the young children in their care, including access to subsidies when eligible, professional development opportunities, support networks, and for FFNs specifically the removal of barriers to obtaining licensure.

Support equitable implementation of the newly established PK-3 ECE Specialist Instruction Credential. With the implementation of UPK, the [PK-3 ECE Specialist Instruction Credential](#) must center the needs of both educators and young children. California's educators need equitable pathways to obtain this credential, regardless of their setting. Credential programs should recognize educators' skills and experience, while also accounting for the costs and time associated with earning a new credential. Creating the credential is not enough—educators must also be supported throughout the process.

Support adoption and implementation of new Child Development Permit recommendations, including the multilingual and infant/toddler specializations. To support the implementation of UPK, a workforce that is equipped to teach in infant/toddler and bilingual settings is imperative. The adoption and implementation of the new Child Development Permit recommendations helps ensure that there is a pool of educators equipped to support young learners to meet the growing demand in California.



DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS (DLLs)

Prioritize the cultural and linguistic strengths of California’s DLLs by affirming bilingualism and the home languages of all children.

DLLs are children whose first language is a language other than English or children who are developing two or more languages, one of which may be English,⁷ and make up nearly 60% of California’s children under age 5.⁸ This includes Latino, Black, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI), and Southwest Asian and North African (SWANA) children. Deepening linguistic justice efforts across the state by expanding multilingual resources and programs that reflect California’s diverse communities is essential and promotes overall development for these young children for success.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Expand availability of ELC bilingual programs offering biliteracy pathways from birth and beyond. Bilingualism has tremendous benefits for young children by helping support brain development and preparing children for a growing multicultural society.⁹ The first five years of a child’s life are particularly critical for their brain, language, and bilingual development. Bilingual programs allow young children to build a strong foundation in their home language, enhancing English learning and promoting proficiency in both languages.¹⁰



Increase the number of bilingual educators across ELC programs. High-quality dual language education programs have been proven to best support the long-term academic success and social-emotional development of DLLs.¹¹ However, California currently faces a dire [bilingual teacher shortage](#). To build bilingual programs beginning in Early Learning programs, the state must address this shortage and expand the pipeline of educators who are trained and equipped to teach young children to learn multiple languages.

Provide educators with access to dedicated DLL-focused professional development. DLL children need access to learning environments that support the development of their home language alongside English. With the large number of DLL children in California, every ELC educator needs access to professional development and training that supports and promotes bilingualism for these young learners.

PRIORITY ACTIONS (CONTINUED)

Establish a process and allocate dedicated funding to identify and support multilingual children in TK settings. [AB 2268](#) was signed into law, exempting TK from using the English Language Proficiency Assessment of California (ELPAC) to identify children as English learners as it was not developmentally and age-appropriate. As a result, a new, developmentally and age-appropriate process for identifying and supporting multilingual children in TK settings must be established to support children’s English and home language development.

Ensure that DLL identification data specified in [AB 393](#) and [AB 1363](#) are included in the Cradle-to-Career Data System. California became the first state to establish an asset-based DLL identification and data collection process to help inform resource allocation at the state level as well as program-level needs. This data collected must be useful, actionable, and inform decision-making. One way we can ensure informed decision-making is to include DLL identification as part of the Early Childhood Integrated Data System and [Cradle-to-Career Data System](#).

Explore our policy priorities and history of legislative achievements to learn more about our work.

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ENDNOTES

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