



Program and Evaluation Committee Report

August 1, 2005

ACTION: X

DISCUSSION: _____

TOPIC TITLE: Early Childhood Education Strategy Recommendations

BACKGROUND

Since 2001, the Commission’s Early Childhood Education strategy has funded stipends for childcare providers through the Professional Development Program (PDP) in order to encourage their participation in training and professional education activities. Two years ago, the program was modified to encourage providers to obtain the Child Development Permit and to move up successive levels on the permit matrix. At the same time, the Commission devoted funding in its Early Childhood Education strategy for a program to facilitate quality improvement in child care centers and family child care homes, a program now known as the Early Learning Demonstration Project (ELDP). In the past year staff have worked with both of the principle ECE strategy contractors, the Child Care Council and the Contra Costa Office of Education to create a collaborative program, the Early Childhood Alliance to facilitate outreach and marketing of quality improvement activities to stipend recipients. All these steps were taken to more closely link stipends and other incentives with qualitative improvement in the education of young children.

ECE Strategy Component	FY 04/05 Allocated funds
Professional Development Program (PDP) Administration and Stipends	617,661
Early Learning Demonstration Project (ELDP)	619,587
Early Learning Alliance	171,624
Inclusion activities	192,500
Parents of children with special needs	162,300
TOTAL	1,763,672
First 5 allocation	1,500,000
State match	263,672

While the Commission has provided stipends to over 2000 providers in the last four years, and despite increasing emphasis on outreach to new participants, evaluation results have shown that it is still difficult to enroll family child care providers, East County-based providers, and Latino and other providers of color in the program. It has also been difficult to determine the



degree to which offering stipends after providers achieve a certain level on the Child Development Permit matrix in turn translates to improved quality for children. To examine these issues and to better map out the Commission's possible response to changing childcare workforce needs, staff formed an Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee composed of representatives of numerous agencies and constituencies.

Over the past year, the Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee met three times to review existing efforts to implement the Professional Development Program. Specifically, the group was charged with determining the steps needed to ensure that the Commission's strategy could meet its objectives for a better-trained and diverse child care workforce. The urgency to develop a highly educated workforce is underscored by the likelihood of a statewide universal preschool initiative in the near future. Such an initiative will undoubtedly impose requirements for childcare workers to hold a Child Development Permit and for classrooms to meet minimum staffing for BA- and AA-level teachers. Simultaneously, the state First 5 Commission announced its requirements for the fourth round of CARES matching grants, which First 5 Contra Costa has participated in for the past five years (the state CARES funds match local dollars spent for approved professional development activities). The state has indicated a similar desire to stress the need for a high-quality and highly diverse workforce.

For the PDP and Alliance in 2005-06, the Advisory Committee and Commission staff recommend

- (1) increasing support to childcare providers to attain higher levels of education, particularly a BA degree and the "Master Teacher" level on the Child Development Permit Matrix; and,
- (2) promoting and supporting the entrance of new, culturally and linguistically diverse providers in areas of highest need and lowest supply.

Specifically, staff and PEC recommend that the Commission increase the funding for the ECE strategy in order to develop a more intensive education and training structure, built around the three community colleges. New child care providers attending community colleges would be supported and encouraged through their academic career by a combination of professional advising, tutors, cohort learning communities, and mini-grants for tuition, books and other expenses.

What stays the same?

The existing core funding areas in the strategy will remain. These include the stipend and ELDP programs, and the inclusion and special needs programs carried out by the Childcare Council and CARE Family Services. The stipend program will remain as it is now, offering stipends to those who obtain the child development permit or move up the permit matrix. Outreach, marketing and other professional development activities will continue to be carried out by the Alliance.

What new components are proposed?

The principal addition is an investment in supporting childcare workers in community colleges to help them move toward degree attainment. This investment would include:

- Full-time education liaisons at each of the three community college campuses to oversee support activities, link with the Alliance and other countywide activities, and advise childcare workers.
- Mini-grants to students to support tuition, books and field work expenses.
- Tutoring for students, especially those for whom English is their second language.
- Establishment of cohort math classes for child care workers (math is the greatest challenge for child care workers seeking degrees).

In order to facilitate providers' attainment of Bachelor's Degrees, First 5 would make a one-time investment in the development of a early childhood education curriculum at Cal State East Bay that would be fully articulated with course offerings at the community college level. The Commission's investment would be for staff time at Cal State to develop an ECE minor within the human development program, with the expectation that a child development major would be introduced as interest grew.

Additional stipends will be offered for participants who complete yearly professional development requirements, and small stipends for "family, friend, and neighbor" providers (unlicensed caregivers) who participate in unit-bearing activities. Both of these components are required for the state CARES matching grants.

Furthermore, expanded Alliance activities are proposed to more fully involve providers in centers and family child care homes. The Alliance would establish five part-time regional advisors who would communicate with center-based staff in their regions on professional development activities. It is expected that each center would in turn have one person designated to communicate with their colleagues about professional development activities. Additionally, the existing family child care advisor would support up to five FCC associations who would receive small grants to implement regional outreach plans to all FCC providers in their regions.

Lastly, First 5 would add a half-time program assistant to assist with project oversight, quality control, and applications procedures.

With these additions, the ECE strategy would become a comprehensive mechanism for the development of highly qualified childcare professionals and high quality childcare settings. In addition to the numerous providers who have regularly received stipends, this program would serve approximately 750 to 900 providers each year, many of who will be from areas of the county with low provider supply or within low API areas (the Commission's school readiness program is targeted to the catchment areas of the schools with the lowest API scores in the county).



A Three Year Plan

To align these proposed changes with the state CARES matching funds initiative, the proposal is made as a three-year plan, the first year of which would include transition and implementation, followed by two years of full program activity. The process and outcome of all activities will be examined to determine whether the proposed components are achieving the desired results for the program.

Funding Sources

To fully fund the proposed program modifications, the Commission would need to approve an additional \$1,401,560 over the next three years. The attached budget illustrates how the existing ECE allocation and CARES match will be used to support the entire program. The Commission could choose to draw the additional funds from the currently unallocated \$4 million previously designated for the Commission's operating account.

Recommendation

Consider the following recommendation: To approve the new structure of the Professional Development Program as a 3 year pilot program with funding as follows:

FY 05/06: \$1,289,828

FY 06/07: \$1,499,334

FY 07/08: \$1,535,266

Upon approval the ECE strategy amounts will be increased to:

FY 05/06: \$1,915,987

FY 06/07: \$2,110,115

FY 07/08: \$2,166,181

To approve the application to First 5 California for matching funds for the Professional Development Program for FY 05 –08.

ATTACHMENT: No