

First 5 Commission of San Diego Technical and Professional Advisory Committee

March 21, 2011

Background on First 5 San Diego's Investment in Quality Preschool

TPAC will receive an overview of: 1) First 5 San Diego's investment in quality preschool through the "Preschool for All" Demonstration Project (PFA); and 2) the planning process for the Commission's future quality preschool initiative. The purpose of this overview is to provide a foundation of background information to assist TPAC in developing recommendations regarding key program components to be included in the future quality preschool initiative.

Connection to the Strategic Plan

The Commission's 2010 - 2015 strategic plan includes the key objective *'Increase the percentage of children ages 3 to 5 enrolled in quality early care and education programs* and the core strategy *"Quality enhancement of preschool classrooms in targeted areas through parent involvement, intensive staff coaching, and screening and supporting children with special needs."* The Commission's 5-Year Program Allocation Plan for FY 2010/11 – 2014/15 allocates a total of \$82 million to support these efforts.

Importance of Quality Early and Education

The most rapid phase of development occurs in a child's first five years of life. These early years are when the brain grows the most— 90% of children's core brain structure is developed by the age of five, providing the foundation for their future health, academic success, and social and emotional well-being. Research shows that children who grow up under conditions of poverty are at greater risk for poor academic achievement, less productive as adults in the labor market, more likely to have lifelong health problems, and more likely to commit crimes and engage in other forms of problematic behavior. Research also shows that by the second or third grade there are sizeable deficits in student achievement, with even larger gaps for socioeconomically disadvantaged groups, including Latinos and African-Americans, English learners, those whose parents have less than a postsecondary education and those with low family income. These children with the largest achievement gaps and from the most disadvantaged socioeconomic groups are the least likely to have been enrolled in a high quality preschool program. As early as kindergarten, they fall behind in the knowledge and skills that will facilitate their ability to succeed in kindergarten and beyond, including the development of critical social-emotional skills.

These facts support the critical importance of providing all children in San Diego County access to a high-quality program delivered by an Early Care & Education (ECE) professional workforce in healthy and safe environments. The key is to select programs that have documented effectiveness, assure that they are implemented well, and recognize the importance of a strong commitment to program evaluation and continuous improvement strategies.

California has begun to take some important steps in improving preschool access and quality. With anticipated "Race to the Top" funding from the federal government, the State established the California State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (ELAC) in November 2009 to expand on the work of the California Early Learning Quality Improvement System Advisory Committee (ELQIS). (ELQIS was the governor-directed, time-limited committee, staffed by California Department of Education, whose objective was to develop a white paper about the implications of quality child care in California. The report was provided to ELAC in December 2010.) ELAC is charged with making recommendations in several important policy areas, including: identifying opportunities for state agencies that administer various early learning and development programs to improve coordination; increasing access for more

young children to existing programs; and establishing an early learning data system that will help inform and monitor the progress of programs and services for California's young children.

These actions reflect an increased interest by California and other states in providing universal access to publicly funded high-quality preschool education for one or two years prior to kindergarten entry. In considering instituting such a program to provide universal preschool, both policymakers and the public will focus on the potential benefits from such a proposed universal preschool program, as well as the estimated costs.

PFA History in San Diego County

PFA Demonstration Project Planning. The First 5 San Diego PFA Demonstration Project was built on a comprehensive planning process that began in 2003 with a Packard Foundation grant awarded to the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE). The grant brought together stakeholders to focus on increasing access to high quality preschool throughout the county. During the same time, the San Diego County Child Care and Development Planning Council developed a white paper on the concept of implementing a PFA Program in San Diego County. In July 2004 the Commission approved funding for a one-year planning process to focus on the development of a county-wide PFA Master Plan. Additional funding was provided by the Foundation for this planning process, which was administered by the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE). More than 250 volunteers representing parents, community leaders, Early Care and Education (ECE) professionals, the business community, institutions of higher learning, and other stakeholders served on nine separate task forces. These task forces reviewed the specific needs of local communities; various program options described in Early Childhood Education research, and explored best practices currently employed in the ECE field. Their efforts generated a number of key findings and ultimately led to the development of the specific recommendations outlined in the comprehensive San Diego County PFA Master Plan document.

PFA Demonstration Project Implementation. In June 2005, the Commission approved \$30 million to fund a five-year PFA Demonstration Project in San Diego County. Then, in December 2005, the Commission approved the final *Preschool for All Master Plan* document; approved the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) as the implementation contractor for the PFA Demonstration Project; and directed staff to develop a phased implementation plan for the five-year PFA Demonstration Project in high priority communities that could ultimately lead to the development of an infrastructure capable of serving all eligible preschool children in San Diego County.

Six communities were initially targeted based on elementary schools' low Academic Performance Index (API) scores during 2004, and demographic factors such as the number of English language learners and average family income in the communities. Currently the following eleven communities participate in the PFA Demonstration Project: Borrego Springs, Chula Vista, El Cajon, Escondido, Lemon Grove, Mountain Empire, National City, San Ysidro, South Bay, Vista, and Valley Center/Pauma.

In December 2010, the Commission approved a one year extension of the current contracted services (to June 30, 2012) so that the PFA Five Year Demonstration Project could be thoroughly evaluated, community input could be obtained, and best local, state and national practices could be identified to inform the development of the new Quality Preschool Initiative.

Participation in the First 5 California Power of Preschool (POP) Program. San Diego First 5 has participated in the First 5 California's POP program since 2006, and draws down approximately 20% of our annual investment in matching funds from the First 5 California. The POP program is scheduled to conclude on June 30, 2011 and First 5 California has not yet identified whether it will continue to support a similar program. San Diego's PFA Demonstration Project has received positive feedback from First 5 California with regard to the wide diversity of providers being supported, the workforce development components and the quality improvement systems that have been implemented.

Summary of PFA Demonstration Project Design

Multi-tiered Service Delivery Model. The objective of the PFA Demonstration Project has been to design, develop and subsequently establish and evaluate a multi-tiered service delivery model for preschool that will support the implementation of high quality PFA programs at the local, regional, and countywide levels. The San Diego County PFA Demonstration Project is designed to:

- ensure universal access to a quality preschool experience at no cost to families;
- provide a wide variety of choice in quality preschool providers for parents;
- promote uniformly high standards for both early learning curriculums and preschool facilities (for both public funded and private providers); and
- support both families as consumers, and local preschool program providers to ensure that children are offered a variety of quality learning experiences that will give them the foundation they need to be successful when they enter kindergarten.

The goal of the PFA Demonstration Project has been to engage families with 4-year-old children (including those children with disabilities and/or special needs, and those whose primary language is other than English) living in the target communities and offer those children a wide variety of preschool programs that meet both PFA Quality Criteria, and are culturally and linguistically appropriate for the communities that are being served.

Infiltrating Targeted Communities. Another goal over the five-year PFA Demonstration Project period has been to successfully enroll and serve 70% of four-year-olds residing in the targeted communities. During the first four years of the Demonstration Project, over 10,000 preschool-age children received a high quality preschool experience in a variety of settings that were identified as PFA provider sites. It is anticipated that more than 6,000 additional children will be served during the final year (FY 2010-11) of the Demonstration Project.

Diversified Provider Base with Stringent Criteria. The intent of the SDCPFA Demonstration Project has been to develop a diversified provider base that includes school districts, for-profit and non-profit preschool providers, faith-based organizations, Head Starts and family child care providers. Each PFA provider must meet a strict set of selection criteria that is designed to ensure children's preschool education will be a valuable, enriching experience that best meets each child's individual needs by providing developmentally and experientially appropriate learning activities. These learning activities are designed to develop and support children's social-emotional, linguistic, cognitive, and physical (gross and fine motor) skills.

Classroom Assessment Tools. The SDCPFA Demonstration Project has focused on providing a quality preschool experience as determined by each teacher's education level and annual assessments of their preschool environment - using the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) or the Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale (FCCERS) in combination with the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). The ECERS and/or FCCERS involve an assessment of the classroom space and furnishings, personal care routines, language and reasoning experiences, learning activities, teacher/child interactions, program structure, and parents/staff involvement opportunities. The ECERS/FCCERS results are then provided to each preschool teacher as a basis for program improvement. The CLASS is an observational tool used to assess the effectiveness of classroom interactions between a teacher and the children under their care. The payment structure for PFA providers in San Diego County is based on a four-tiered system of quality ratings which includes both the ECERS/FCCERS assessment and the education level of the classroom teacher.

Key Accomplishments. The PFA Demonstration Project key accomplishments during the last five years are:

- The development of an integrated county-wide preschool program infrastructure;
- Identifying certified staff and subcontractors to provide external reviews for classrooms;
- Developing a systematic plan to provide peer mentoring services for classroom teachers and ECE program administrators; and

- Implementing parent education and family engagement support programs for preschool providers.

In addition, the program has instituted universal developmental screening procedures for children and provided support for full classroom inclusion efforts; provided targeted training and coaching for classroom teachers based on their individual Professional Development Plans, and implemented evaluation design and procedures for intake, external review and program monitoring.

The Key Features of PFA. The key features of the PFA Demonstration Project include:

- Providing 3-hour, 180 day per-year, high-quality, no-cost preschool programs;
- The development of highly qualified instructional staff and quality learning environments;
- The inclusion of a wide variety of preschool providers to support parent choice;
- Universal developmental screenings for children participating in the program;
- Referral and access to health, mental health and social services available through First 5 funded and other community-based service programs;
- Developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate classroom activities for children and a variety of parent education opportunities for their parents/caregivers;
- Close interface with K-12 school districts and existing childcare subsidy programs located in the target communities served by the program;
- Ensuring that providers maintain safe and hazard-free preschool environments to encourage optimum learning opportunities for children;
- Providing full support for families as partners in their child's education.

A brief PFA program description and summary of activities/outcomes is provided in Attachments 1 & 2.

Seven Primary Program Components of the Preschool for All Demonstration Project

Following are the seven primary program components of the Preschool for All Demonstration Project:

- 1) Positively impacting growth and development of children utilizing children's and environmental assessments [eg...ECERS, FCCERS, CLASS, described earlier in this summary report) and health/safety checks
- 2) Developmental screening for children utilizing the Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ and/or ASQ-SE)
- 3) Parent engagement to enhance parents ability to be actively involved in their child's education utilizing the work of Joyce Epstein (from John Hopkins University)
- 4) Parent education that used research based curriculum to educate parents about pre-school age children
- 5) Professional develop for PFA Early Childhood Educators to include both individual and group support
- 6) Collaborative relationship at the local, state and federal level so that First 5 San Diego funded services may be aligned with California Department of Education systems
- 7) PFA Infrastructure development to support the successful implementation and delivery of high quality preschool in the eleven targeted San Diego County communities

More detailed information regarding these seven components is provided in Attachment 3.

Next Steps in the Development of the RFP and Timelines

Commission staff has implemented the planning activities in the development of the RFP for its Quality Preschool Program. The key activities and targeted timeframes are provided in the following chart:

Target Date	Activity
Early Spring 2011	Begin research for the Summative Study of the Five-Year Demonstration Project
Early Spring 2011	Begin research on State/National best practices and anticipated State ECE requirements

Early Spring 2011	Provide Overview of PFA Demonstration Project to TPAC (March 21, 2011)
Spring 2011	Obtain Community Input on Quality Preschool Services
Spring 2011	Provide Preliminary Information to TPAC on Quality Preschool Program Components for Feedback (May 16, 2011)
Summer 2011	Complete Summative Study, and Research; Draft the Statement of Work
Summer 2011	Provide Final Recommendations to TPAC, if needed (July 2011)
Fall 2011	Provide Summative Study to Commission; Commission Approval to Release RFP (September 12, 2011)
Fall 2011	Release RFP
Winter 2011-12	Receive Proposals, Proposal Evaluation
Spring 2012	Commission Award and Contractor Approval
Summer 2012	Quality Preschool Services Begin (July 1, 2012)

Summary of Commission History

- **December 13, 2010 (Item 2):** The Commission approved to extend the contract for one additional year (to June 30, 2012) for up to \$14.3 million with no major changes to be made in the service delivery model or targeted communities during FY 2011-12.
- **September 11, 2009 (Item 1):** The Commission approved a *5-Year Program Allocation Plan* to set funding limits for First 5 programs during the five fiscal years (FY 10/11 through FY 14/15). The new *5-Year Program Allocation Plan* included \$7,827,782 in additional funding to enable a FY 2010/11 expansion of the SDCPFA Demonstration Project into the three (3) additional communities of Chula Vista, El Cajon and Borrego Springs. Total funding for the final year of the SDCPFA Demonstration Project - FY 2010/11 was \$14.3 million.
- **December 5, 2005 (Item 6):** The Commission approved the final PFA Master Plan, and directed staff to develop a phased implementation plan for the 5-year PFA demonstration project in San Diego County. The Commission also approved the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) as the fiscal agent for the PFA Demonstration Project.
- **June 20, 2005 (Item 13):** The Commission approved \$30 million for a local, 5-year demonstration project.
- **July 19, 2004 (Item 12):** The Commission approved an allocation of \$441,743 for a PFA (Preschool for All) planning grant awarded to the San Diego County Office of Education.

Reference Documents and Articles Attached:

- Attachment 1: First 5 San Diego's Investment in Quality Preschool
- Attachment 2: PFA Program Summary
- Attachment 3: A Summary of the Seven Primary Program Components of the Preschool for All Demonstration Project
- Attachment 4: Strategies for Advancing Preschool Adequacy & Efficiency in California
- Attachment 5: Business Leader and the New Education Agenda: Investments in Our Littlest Learners