

## **California's Preschool Expansion Initiative**

The California Department of Education (CDE), in collaboration with First 5 California (F5CA) will build upon California's deep investments in early childhood education, its publicly funded preschool programs, and its local investments and systems, to expand access to High-Quality Inclusive Preschool Programs (HQIPPs) for children in California's High-Need Communities. This initiative will strengthen and expand the existing California State Preschool Program by improving quality and increasing access. Through the Preschool Expansion Initiative, California will create 1,274 new HQIPP slots, enhance 2,483 slots to meet the HQIPP standards, and serve 934 children with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) in High-Quality and Inclusive settings.

### **Initiative Goals**

The Initiative seeks to achieve the following goals:

1. Develop and expand successful local institutions and programs to increase access and improve outcomes for children and families with a special focus on children with disabilities;
2. Support the voluntary alignment of existing local efforts into a statewide network supported by services and technical assistance provided by the CDE and its primary collaborative partner F5CA, along with other statewide partners;
3. Invest in capacity-building and sustainable infrastructure, particularly at the local level;
4. Develop sustainable, high-quality programs that are able to maximize the benefits of Preschool Expansion funding without creating future pressure on the state's budget; and
5. Integrate recent innovations involving similar principles, especially California's TQRIS: the California Quality Continuum Framework.

### **Key Design Elements**

California's Preschool Expansion Initiative will develop a cohesive pathway to a future State Preschool Program that effectively integrates multiple funding streams. The project will leverage state and local funding, build upon existing quality initiatives, increase inclusion, engage families, strengthen the P-16 continuum, and enhance professional development.

### **Expected Outcomes and Contributions for Research, Policy, and Practice**

A major element of California's Preschool Expansion Initiative is the evaluation it will conduct with Infrastructure Funds and matching funds from F5CA. This multi-step outcomes study will determine which of the required High-Quality elements or combination of elements have the greatest impact on school success and healthy development, creating later cost savings associated with improved child outcomes. Results from this evaluation will provide direction to both California and the nation to help develop future program guidelines that most effectively use resources and improve child outcomes.

### **Population Served**

California greatly needs to increase access to HQIPPs. Nearly half of California's children live below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level and there is a large discrepancy between eligibility and enrollment in preschool programs. California will subgrant 95 percent of Preschool Expansion Grant funds to 11 geographically diverse Subgrantees that serve 22 of California's 58 counties, home to more than 60 percent of the state's population. Subgrantees will provide HQIPPs to four-year-olds at 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level by improving access to and quality of preschool programs with a focus on supporting the full inclusion of children with IEPs, English learners, and migrant populations.