

**Principles and Recommendations:
AB 212 and California’s ECE Workforce System of Support**

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Introduction: AB 212 as Part of the ECE Workforce System of Support

A child's early learning experiences set them up for future life success and California is poised for action to build and expand an early learning system to ensure that more children in the golden state have access to high-quality early learning opportunities. Achieving the promise of early learning depends on the skills and abilities of the adults that work with young children. Research shows that the adults that work with young children are crucial to children's physical, social, and emotional development.¹

Since 2000, California has made funds available through Assembly Bill (AB) 212 (Aroner), to support child development staff retention activities conducted by Local Planning Councils (LPCs) in each county. The intent of this program was to improve the retention of qualified child development employees who work directly with children in state-subsidized child development programs. AB 212 provided counties with considerable flexibility, and as a result AB212 implementation looks very different across different counties.

The context in which the AB 212 program has played a critical role is rapidly evolving. As the state looks to provide more high-quality early learning opportunities for its young children, the pivotal role of a qualified, professional workforce is amplified. California must create and enhance a coordinated system of support around the ECE workforce. The AB 212 program is an important piece of that system and policies and practices around AB 212 must evolve in order to achieve a comprehensive and equitable system of support. The evolution of AB 212 and the principles and recommendations that follow have been envisioned within a context of expanded investment in both AB 212 and other ECE workforce support across all provider types.

The principles and recommendations below were informed by a series of interviews with key stakeholders, research into AB 212 implementation, and the convening of a cross-sector workgroup.

Principles for Strengthening the ECE Workforce System of Support

As the state looks to create a more coordinated system of support for the ECE workforce, it should keep the following principles in mind:

1. Low levels of compensation are a paramount factor related to ECE workforce retention and quality. Efforts to support the professional development and educational attainment of the ECE workforce must be coupled with increases in compensation.
2. As California strengthens and scales its ECE system and system of support for the ECE workforce, all effort should be made to connect components of the system where possible, while also maintaining flexibility for the system to evolve.
 - a. The State is working towards a future where all ECE programs and providers can participate in Quality Counts California if they wish. Efforts to support ECE educator professional development and educational attainment, such as AB 212, should be connected to Quality Counts California, but these connections should be loose, to allow for flexibility as Quality Counts undergoes changes.
 - b. Efforts to support the ECE workforce should build upon the state's existing work. For instance, ECE workforce educational advancement should be linked to the Preschool Learning Foundations and professional growth should be captured in the ECE Workforce Registry as possible.
3. In order for programs like AB 212 to be successful, there needs to be overall increases in funding and supports for key infrastructure components such as advising, data systems, etc.
4. California should offer an option for ECE professionals and those aspiring to be ECE professionals to earn a no-cost degree.
5. There should be equity in the types of professional development and educational supports, including stipends, that practitioners can access across different counties.
6. Coordinated early childhood data systems are critical to the state's ability to evaluate the impact of state investments.

¹ Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2015). Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation.

Recommendations for AB 212

The following recommendations should inform changes to and/or efforts to strengthen the AB 212 program:

1. AB 212 should be a professional development and educational attainment initiative. AB 212 stipends should be used to support individual educator professional growth and educational attainment, which will ultimately contribute to raising the quality of the ECE programs in which they work.
2. Stipends should strengthen and improve the quality and craft of the ECE workforce.
 - a. Stipends should be connected to a teacher's higher education attainment and/or professional development plan and should support educators to move up the California ECE Career Lattice.
 - b. Stipends should support individual educator growth, and be part of the site's quality improvement plan, as appropriate
3. Stipends should be available across child development program types and settings.
4. Stipends should support diversity in the ECE profession, across care settings and levels of leadership.
5. There should be some uniform data collection related to AB 212 administration so the state can understand the impact of the program on the ECE workforce.
6. The AB 212 program should be guided by high state-level standards but should retain as much flexibility in local implementation as possible.
 - a. Counties should have implementation flexibility to respond to local needs.
 - b. Counties should be able to blend and braid their AB 212 funding with funding from other sources.

Considerations for Supportive System Infrastructure

Supportive system infrastructure is critical for AB 212 funding to have its intended impact as an educational attainment and professional development program. Key considerations and areas for infrastructure investments include:

1. Higher education and professional development advising is a critical infrastructure component for the success of the AB 212 initiative. This type of advising helps bring people into the quality system and ensure that participants are on the right track.
2. Mechanisms must be created or expanded to fund no-cost degree options for the ECE workforce.
3. The California College Promise Grant could be expanded to early learning professionals (with a service requirement).
4. A fee waiver type (categorical waiver) could be created for professionals aspiring to be in the ECE workforce.
5. Investments in verification and data structures are needed to monitor the impact of investments in the ECE workforce, and the impact of well-prepared teachers on child outcomes.
6. Availability of linguistically appropriate professional development opportunities will need to be expanded to meet ECE workforce needs.
7. Capacity must be built at institutions of higher education related to course-offering, practice-based training, place-based course offerings, etc.
8. California should pursue ways to link ECE workforce development issues to existing workforce development mechanisms and funding.

Workgroup List

Thank you to the following individuals who served on the AB 212 Workgroup:

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