

July 7, 2017

Dr. Michael Kirst, President
California State Board of Education
1430 N Street, Suite 5111
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Leveraging ESSA to integrate early learning into a clearly articulated P-12 system

Via email to sbe@cde.ca.gov

Dear President Kirst:

We write to offer our thanks and appreciation to the California State Board of Education (SBE) and the California Department of Education (CDE) in your efforts to develop our state's plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). We also write to ask the Board to join us in recognizing the educational needs of our youngest children in California's ESSA State Plan. Research is clear that a focus on early years is a catalyst for advancing the academic success of students and is associated with increased high school graduation and greater college and career readiness – positive results that benefit all. In this letter, we offer recommendations that would expand opportunities for early care and education (ECE) to play a more prominent role in the ESSA State Plan.

We appreciate how the current version of the State Plan recognizes the importance of school readiness and states that the state will “work to integrate early learning into a clearly articulated P-12 system” in its introduction. It is also encouraging to see that under Title 1, Part A: Access to Educators, School Conditions, and School Transitions, the State Plan recognizes the important work the state has done with the Preschool Learning Foundations and Curricular Frameworks, the Infant Toddler Learning and Development Foundations, and transitional kindergarten. We also agree with the references made to the important role of preschool in the migrant services program, and the education of preschool-aged homeless children. Given the vital role early care and education plays in developing a strong foundation for educational success, we urge the state to embed ECE throughout the State Plan.

The current version of the federal ESSA provides a timely opportunity to optimize children's developmental and academic paths by supporting the alignment of the philosophies, goals and objectives of early learning and the K-12 system. Throughout the federal ESSA, 'preschool' or 'early learning' are referenced numerous times signifying its importance in achieving the goals of ESSA. This emphasis reflects current research on the strong significance of child development and learning during the early years as foundational for future success.¹



Dual Language Learners (DLLs)/English Learners (ELs)ⁱⁱ make up 22% of California’s K-12 population, and represent 57% of children age zero to five.ⁱⁱⁱ Particularly for young DLLs whose development of their primary language is integral to their cognitive and socio-emotional development, the timing and appropriateness of instructional strategies have significant implications for their capacity to acquire English as a second language, their evolving sense of self, and their overall academic achievement.^{iv} With the recent passage of Proposition 58 that creates more opportunities for students to become bilingual and biliterate, ESSA presents an opportunity to strengthen the educational experiences of children who come from homes where English is not the primary language.

To ensure that the needs of our early learners, including DLLs, are met, we submit the following comments on the draft ESSA State Plan. These recommendations come from ideas and input that have been vetted by over 100 ECE stakeholders across the state and specifically show where ECE and DLLs can be incorporated into California's ESSA State Plan.

Across the State Plan

Building off the vision included in the introduction to “integrate early learning into a clearly articulated P-12 system”, we recommend including the specific “P-12” language across the State Plan, replacing the “K” in K-2, K-8, or K-12 with “P” to ensure consistency and affirm the state’s commitment to a robust and aligned “Preschool -12th grade” system. Integrating our youngest learners and ensuring they are elevated throughout the ESSA State Plan requires an intentional and systematic approach that begins with state and local data collection and reporting of preschool students.

Currently, California only collects data on kindergarten and transitional kindergarten (TK) enrollment within the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS). We recommend that the state articulates its plan for reporting the number and percent of preschool enrollments within CBEDS. ESSA requires that the State Educational Agency (SEA) report the number and percentage of students enrolled in all preschool programs, within the State report card.¹ Local educational agencies (LEAs) are also required to collect and report preschool enrollment data within their annual report card.² As the state and local communities continue to recognize the value of and expand access to high-quality early childhood supports, there is a critical need to establish systems that help identify existing gaps. By equipping LEAs with this key data point, districts will be better positioned to deploy resources in a manner that best meets student need and promotes their growth. We recommend that the state take steps to align local enrollment data practices with the previously mentioned CBEDS recommendation to capture the participation in district- or center-based early childhood programming within the district enrollment area.

¹ Sec 1111(h)(1)(C)(viii)(II)(aa)

² Sec 1111(h)(2)(C)

In Title I, Part A: Accountability

Section 1111, State Accountability: Collect and publicly report data on early learners, including chronic absenteeism and suspension rates, as soon as data are available.

Proposed Change: In Indicators (ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(B)), specifically (b) Indicator for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools that are Not High Schools (Other Academic Indicators) and (e) School Quality or Student Success Indicators, we recommend including clear references to early childhood education with regard to chronic absence and suspension rates and adding language about the need for early childhood indicators that are aligned to K-12.

The amended sections would read:

- (b) In the first paragraph, “Chronic absence will serve as an additional academic indicator for grades Preschool-8”, in place of K-8 in the current draft. In the second paragraph: “This indicator will be especially important for schools that only serve students in preschool, transitional kindergarten (TK), and kindergarten through 2nd grade (K-2)”, in place of grades K-2 in the current draft.
- (b) To add reference to ECE with regard to overall accountability, we recommend adding the following language: “California will explore the identification and inclusion of early childhood indicators in the state’s accountability plan that support, and are in alignment with, P-12 policies that support long-term student success.”
- (b) To support inclusion of ECE in the chronic absence section, we recommend adding the following rationale: “Studies reveal that chronic absence for 4-year-old students correlated with less kindergarten readiness, including lower letter recognition and pre-literacy scores, continued low attendance, increased grade retention by third grade, and on average had lower academic outcomes than peers with better attendance.^v Research shows that students who arrived at pre-K with the weakest reading skills and attended regularly saw the biggest gains.^{vi}”
- (e) We also recommend adding language on ECE with regard to suspension rates. The current draft shows that collection of this indicator exists only for elementary, middle, and high schools. Thus, this section would add the following language: “To ensure suspension rates are being addressed early, LEAs that operate ECE programs will also report on suspension rates for ECE programs.”

Rationale: In the current draft of the ESSA State Plan, there is no mention of indicators for our youngest learners in early childhood programs. We recommend that data be reported from “P-8,” particularly with regard to chronic absenteeism, to note the importance of enrollment in the early years and address achievement gaps that start from earlier on in the academic trajectory. Attending a high-quality early learning program has been shown to have important effects on students’ academic success in later years, from increased test scores in elementary school to reduced Special Education placement and higher graduation rates.^{vii} Signs that students will be chronically absent begin in the early grades,^{viii} making it all the more important to monitor chronic absence in the early years, when family engagement efforts tend to be most successful^{ix} and schools can prevent future disengagement.^x Suspension rates are also important to track for preschool students. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has issued a policy

statement for “preventing and severely limiting expulsion and suspension practices in early childhood settings,”^{xi} as research suggests preschool children are suspended and expelled at high rates^{xii} and this likely has a negative impact on academic attainment and other outcomes.^{xiii} Collecting and reporting data for LEA-based preschools could be a first step to reducing developmentally inappropriate school exclusion in the early years and aligning discipline policies for P-12.

In Title I, Part A: Assessments

Section 1111, Assessments: Ensure that preschool children are identified and assessed using authentic measures designed for those languages (rather than a direct translation of English assessments) that capture both first and second language development.

Proposed Change: In Native Language Assessments (ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(F) and 34 CFR § 200.6(f)(2)(ii)), we recommend inserting language to identify and assess English Learner students starting from preschool. Section (iii) provides space to indicate which assessments are not available and are needed. Following “In support of biliteracy” in the second paragraph of (iii), we recommend the following language, “Ensure that preschool students are identified and assessed using authentic formative and developmentally appropriate measures designed for those languages (rather than a direct translation of English assessments) that capture both first and second language development. Offer guidance on the flexibility LEAs have to partner with neighborhood early childhood providers to support articulation and alignment on assessments to support student transitions between early childhood and early elementary.”

Rationale: Research shows that children can learn multiple languages successfully and that the brain is most receptive to language learning in the earliest years of life.^{xiv} Sections (ii) and (iii) mention assessments for ELs in “grades three through eight and high school” without reference to early learners below grade three. As the State Plan aims to present an articulated “P-12 system,” we recommend explicit mention of assessments that are inclusive of students in preschool through grade 2. In section (ii), the State Plan states that “California is committed to providing reliable assessments in languages other than English based on the constructs being measured.” Ensuring that assessments are developmentally and linguistically appropriate is important particularly with regard to our DLLs/ELs: “It has been widely demonstrated that as a result of inadequate high stakes tests, emergent bilinguals experience more remedial instruction, greater probability of assignment to lower curriculum tracks, higher drop-out rates, poorer graduation rates, and disproportionate referral to special education classes.”^{xv} Moreover, assessments that capture “both first and second language development” is crucial as measuring language progress in the home language is important in the early years. For DLLs, their primary language is integral to their cognitive and socio-emotional development, and the timing and appropriateness of instructional strategies have significant implications for their capacity to acquire English as a second language, their evolving sense of self, and their overall academic achievement.^{xvi}

In Title I, Part A: Access to Educators, School Conditions, and School Transitions

Section 1111, School Conditions and School Transitions: Ensure integration of early learning into a clearly articulated system in school conditions and school transitions.

Proposed Change: In School Conditions (ESEA section 1111(g)(1)(C)), we recommend amending “K-8” to “P-8”. The section would read: “**California’s strong commitment to the improvement of school conditions for student learning is further underscored by its selection of chronic absence as its additional P-8 academic measures under ESSA.**”

Rationale: As mentioned above, addressing chronic absenteeism in early years is an important step towards addressing achievement gaps that start from early on in the academic trajectory. Signs that students will be chronically absent begin in the early grades,^{xvii} making it important to monitor chronic absence in preschool, when family engagement efforts tend to be most successful^{xviii} and schools can prevent future disengagement.^{xix} Chronic absenteeism in preschool has been correlated with lower school readiness and higher 3rd grade retention.^{xx} See rationale on page 3 for more research on this issue.

Explicitly acknowledge the importance of P-12 alignment by including preschool in the discussion of curriculum frameworks.

Proposed Change: In School Transitions (ESEA section 1111(g)(1)(D)), we recommend inserting consistent references to the importance of ECE and K-12 alignment. The amended section would read: “**Curriculum frameworks include sections on content and pedagogy for each grade level, from preschool and transitional kindergarten through grade 12, to help LEAs develop or improve coherent educational programs between feeder and receiving schools.**” As part of the description of what the state does to disseminate best practices, we recommend adding, “**The state will also provide guidance and/or support LEAs and early childhood providers to build awareness on research-based pedagogical practice designed for our youngest learners, including dual language learners (DLLs), to support these transitions.**”

Rationale: It is explicitly stated that the State will support LEAs receiving assistance under Title I, Part A “in meeting the needs of students at all levels of schooling”, which includes ECE. The second paragraph even explains the importance of California’s highly regarded ECE curriculum frameworks and how they are aligned with Common Core State Standards. Research shows that alignment of curricula is an important part of achieving the “successful transitions” from preschool to kindergarten highlighted in this section.^{xxi}

Identify articulation agreements between the preschools and transitional kindergarten as well as elementary, middle, and high schools.

Proposed Change: To ensure successful transitioning of students through their education continuum, we recommend including articulation agreements from earlier on in the academic trajectory. After the sentence, “The state is currently identifying articulation agreements that exist between our middle schools, high schools and colleges,” we recommend adding: “**The state**

will also identify articulation agreements between our preschools, transitional kindergartens, and elementary schools to ensure students have a strong educational foundation.” Moreover, we recommend clear guidance and support from the State regarding the use of funds to support alignment and articulation for P-12: “The state will incorporate clear guidance and/or prompts within the templates for the LEA Local Report Card, the Comprehensive Plan for Schoolwide Programs and the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) to request information on how districts are investing federal (Title Funds, Head Start, etc.) and state (LCFF, State Preschool, etc.) dollars to more effectively integrate and align the early childhood and K-12 systems in their districts towards a P-12 system. This includes helping districts and schools more clearly articulate their plans to support, coordinate, and integrate early childhood programs that help promote the transition of students into local elementary school programs.”

Rationale: Articulation agreements between preschools and elementary schools are a hallmark of strong transition to kindergarten, which have been linked with higher test scores by first grade, teachers giving students more favorable ratings on social and emotional competencies, and faster skill development.^{xxii} Such articulation agreements can foster a common understanding of pedagogy in the early grades; identify opportunities for joint curriculum planning; and facilitate data sharing, such as kindergarten readiness assessment results.^{xxiii} LEAs receiving Title I funds are in fact *required* to develop agreements regarding these practices with Head Start programs.^{xxiv} For example, a Head Start program and an LEA might have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that describes how it will align curriculum, define desired outcomes, and communicate about previous educational experience, such as participation in a dual language program.^{xxv} In order to facilitate successful transitions for *all* students, we recommend that the state encourage articulation agreements between elementary school and preschools.

Support school transitions through coordination and alignment of ECE and K-12 data systems and practices.

Proposed change: To promote a more coordinated approach to establishing high-quality early childhood systems, we recommend inserting the following language: “The state can lead the development of a model Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and corresponding supports to meet the ESSA requirement for LEAs to develop agreements with Head Start agencies and other entities to carry out early childhood development programs.³ Specifically the state can address the development of systemic procedures for receiving and transferring records, establishing communication between schools staff and ECE counterparts including programs enrolled in California’s Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), conducting meetings to discuss the developmental and other needs of individual children; organizing joint transition-related training, and linking educational services with services provided by local Head Start agencies. As transitional kindergarten (TK) sits at the intersection of early childhood education and early elementary, LEAs can leverage TK where possible to bring ECE and early elementary staff together to support alignment and transitions.”

³ Sec 1119(a-b)

We support the explicit language at the end of the section that highlights “successful student transitions from **pre-kindergarten** to postsecondary” and recommend inserting the following language at the end of the section: “The state will create a roadmap to guide LEAs in partnering with neighborhood preschool providers and provide examples of how LEAs can use district resources to increase access to early learning; extend professional development (PD) opportunities to early childhood educators for greater articulation and alignment with elementary teachers; provide PD for preschool and elementary educators focused on pedagogy and best practices in child development, supporting Dual Language Learners (DLLs) and parent and family engagement; and promote practices that supports students in the transition to kindergarten.”

Rationale: Purposeful transitions from preschool to kindergarten enhance linkages between families, preschools, and elementary schools during children’s early years of development. Emerging research suggests that strong transitions benefit children: from more favorable ratings from teachers on social competencies, faster skill development, to modest increases in academic achievement, with the largest benefits for children who are economically disadvantaged.^{xxvi} Keys part of successful transitions include aligned assessments, standards, and curriculum that are sequenced and coordinated between preschool and kindergarten; joint professional development between preschool and elementary staff; and strong communication between preschools and elementary schools, including data sharing.^{xxvii} Since LEAs and preschools often operate independently, LEAs would benefit from a roadmap that explains what is encouraged and required for their coordination with preschools. The state could facilitate the transfer of data such as preschool enrollment, chronic absenteeism, and suspension data, in addition to assessment results such as from the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP).

We support the reference to coordination with preschools in the section on School Transitions.

Proposed change: We support how the State Plan explicitly notes the importance of alignment between California’s early education programs with the rest of the education system. To maintain the “P-12” language consistently across the plan that was used in the introduction, we recommend amending language to read, “California’s early education programs are administered by the CDE to ensure there is alignment across the P-12 system.”

Support: We support the mention of the nine domains of the “Preschool Learning Foundations” that closely align with the *California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations*, the California Content Standards, the Common Core State Standards, and the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. We also support how the mentioned publication will be used in Title I, Part A technical assistance to support LEAs in using these funds to “work with early education providers to support successful transitions from early childhood education to elementary school.” Finally, we applaud the explicit mention of “transitional kindergarten (TK)”, since TK can serve as the bridge between ECE and K-12.

In Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children

Section 1304, Education of Migratory Children: Supporting the needs of Migratory Children starting with early childhood education.

Support: In Supporting Needs of Migratory Children (ESEA section 1304(b)(1)), we support the explicit reference to “preschool migratory children” and “English learners” in the State Plan to ensure that the unique needs of our youngest migratory children are met.

Rationale: While ECE is important for all children, the benefits are greatest for low-income children and those who are DLLs.^{xxviii} Migrant youth are particularly likely to come from families that earn extremely low wages and are generally English Language Learners (ELL). What is more, they tend to live in substandard living conditions and are exposed to severe health risks.^{xxix} Ensuring that migratory children have access to high-quality ECE is all the more important.

In Title II, Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction

Section 2101, Supporting Effective Instruction: Provide state support for the development of bilingual teachers, including those who teach ECE, to align with the need created after passage of Proposition 58.

Proposed Change: In System of Certification and Licensing (ESEA section 2101(d)(2)(B)), we recommend inserting the following language to elaborate on the licensing and credential for the above listed teachers: “The state will encourage districts to use Title II funds for language certification of teachers to align with Proposition 58 workforce needs and to update and align certification and licensing standards for early childhood educators.”

Rationale: The passage of Proposition 58 in 2016 removed restrictions on bilingual education programs, allowing districts to more easily create or expand bilingual and immersion programs. Teachers in bilingual programs must be pedagogically skilled to support language acquisition and academic content mastery. The state currently faces bilingual teacher shortages, however, and few teacher preparation institutes offer bilingual authorization training programs.^{xxx} California authorizes fewer than half the number of new bilingual teachers than it did when bilingual education was at its peak in the mid-1990s.^{xxxi} Shortages of bilingual teachers are particularly important for ECE, since bilingual programs are often offered in the early grades, when children’s language development is occurring most rapidly. Neuroscience shows that the brain is most receptive to language learning in the earliest years of life and that a child’s home language is central to socio-emotional development, the development of English proficiency, and overall academic achievement.^{xxxii}

Provide joint-professional development among preschool and K-3rd grade educators and include center and school administrators to emphasize the social-emotional developmental and educational needs of early learners, including DLLs.

Proposed Change: In Improving Skills of Educators (ESEA section 2101(d)(2)(J)), we recommend including an explicit reference to the ECE workforce. The amended section would read:

“Successful implementation of standards requires strong instructional leadership in every school and well-prepared teachers in every classroom, including preschool classrooms.” In the section that outlines that Title II Part A funds are available to support the dissemination and implementation of SBE adopted standards using a variety of strategies, we recommended that these strategies include “Joint-professional development among preschool and K-3rd grade educators, including center and school administrators, to emphasize the social-emotional and educational needs of early learners, including DLLs.”

Rationale: Although ESSA explicitly allows for Title funding to be spent on ECE, California’s State Plan currently refers only to K-12 teachers and administrators. High quality professional learning is critical for ensuring quality teaching.^{xxxiii} Early learning educators, however, are often left out of professional development opportunities, even when located on the same campus as K-12 teachers. High quality teaching is critical to ensuring that preschool investments pay off,^{xxxiv} and investment in professional development is one way of ensuring this quality. Including early educators in elementary school professional development can ensure that children transition smoothly from preschool to kindergarten, one of the goals that the state sets forth in the plan. Collaboration between preschool and elementary school teachers is a hallmark of good transitions that has been linked with higher test scores by first grade, more favorable ratings of children’s social and emotional competencies, and faster skill development.^{xxxv} This cooperation might include kindergarten teachers visiting preschool classrooms, joint curriculum planning, and discussion of kindergarten readiness assessment results.^{xxxvi}

Encourage the use of Title II funds to develop both elementary school principals and ECE administrators’ understanding of effective teaching practices that support young children, including DLLs.

Proposed Change: Amend the section “Support for School Leaders” by adding the following underlined language: “Activities may include [...] engagement of K–12 principals, ECE program directors, and other school leaders, achieved through collegially selected topics of high interest (e.g., development of cultural competency, instructional support for early learners, and access to instructional resources) and professional learning opportunities; and strategies that establish and support distributed or shared leadership at the school site that include teacher leaders along with site administrators in communities of practice, supportive infrastructure, and adequate time for the work to unfold.”

Rationale: Although elementary school principals are often in charge of early learning programs, and are responsible for supporting and evaluating teachers in TK and state preschool, most have little training or professional development in ECE.^{xxxvii} Ensuring that these educators have an up-to-date understanding of child development and early language development is critical if they are to be effective instructional leaders for all children, including young children who arrive at school with little English. Joint PD would also be particularly helpful for ECE site directors who, like ECE teachers, too infrequently participate in school-site professional learning.

Ensure that professional development is culturally and linguistically responsive, particularly for staff that serve the families of ELLs and DLLs.

Proposed Change: We recommend encouraging professional development that is culturally and linguistically responsive for our DLLs and ELs by adding the following language to section 2101(d)(2)(J): “Encourage the use of funds for professional development for staff that advances parent and family engagement, particularly for families of DLLs, which should include research-based engagement practices, such as examining the best engagement practices related to family literacy models, family album and writing workshops of early childhood education providers.”

Rationale: Positive family-program connections have been linked to greater academic motivation, grade promotion, and socio-emotional skills across all types of young children, including those from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Research finds that high levels of family engagement often result from strong program-family partnerships characterized by trust, shared values, ongoing communication, mutual respect, and attention to the child’s well-being.^{xxviii} Family engagement is a skill that educators can improve through professional development.

In Title III, Part A, Subpart 1: English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement

Section 3111, English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement: Identify and disseminate information to LEAs and preschool providers about models and approaches of best practices, including dual immersion programs and family and community engagement strategies that support DLLs from preschool through 3rd grade (P-3).

Proposed Change: In the section on Support for English Learner Progress (ESEA section 3113(b)(6)), we recommend inserting language to elaborate on the “systems of support” that would provide assistance to LEAs to ensure that students meet English language proficiency and academic standards. The amended section would include the following language:

- “Initiate new preschool classrooms at school sites with the highest percentage of ELs to develop models for supporting young DLLs.”;
- “Invest in both pre-service and in-service for P-3rd grade teacher education that advances the knowledge and pedagogical practice of DLLs.”;
- “Allot funds that specifically support the best practices for the transition of DLLs from preschool to elementary school. Also earmark a portion of funds to support the transition practices of preschool providers.”;
- “Identify and disseminate information to LEAs and preschool providers about models and approaches of best practices, including dual immersion programs, and family and community engagement strategies that support DLLs from prekindergarten level through 3rd grade (P-3)”; and
- “Create a toolkit to distribute to P-12 to support programs that outline messaging and strategies for families on the benefits and value of the home language, with clearly defined child outcomes. Also, to be included is an outline of existing language program approaches and differences to support family engagement and transition practices.”

Rationale: It is important to include systems of support for DLLs/ELs from the beginning of their academic trajectory to close on achievement gaps. A vast body of research shows that children who attend high-quality preschool programs: perform better on standardized tests in reading and math; are less likely to be placed in special education or held back a grade; and are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college.^{xxxix} Studies show that these outcomes can lead to substantial cost savings for school districts and that DLLs may benefit more relative to their monolingual peers as early learning addresses the educational opportunity gaps present prior to school entrance.^{xl} Research over the past two decades has shown that: the brain is most receptive to language learning in the earliest years of life; children are not confused by learning multiple languages, rather, the brain is wired to learn any language,^{xli} and home language is central to developing proficiency in English and other languages, as well as their cognitive and socio-emotional development, their evolving sense of self, and overall academic achievement.^{xlii} It is imperative that educators are supported to get caught up on the current research, pedagogy and best practices for effective instruction of DLLs/ELs, as well as ensuring instruction in bilingual classrooms supports bilingualism and biliteracy.

In Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title VII, Subtitle B

Section 722 of the McKinney-Vento Act Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program:
Supporting preschool aged students via coordinating with early childhood programs.

Support: We support inclusion of “preschool-age students” in the section for Support for School Personnel (722(g)(1)(D) of the McKinney-Vento Act) and repeated emphasis on the need to serve “preschool” children in the context of homelessness in Access to Services (722(g)(1)(F) of the McKinney-Vento Act). We support the explicit mention that CDE will continue to coordinate with Head Start and Early Head Start to meet the needs of “homeless preschoolers”.

Rationale: Homelessness is linked with a host of negative impacts for young children, including poor social and emotional development, academic performance, and health.^{xliii} Homeless children are also less likely than their peers to be enrolled in an ECE program.^{xliv} Emphasizing the enrollment of preschool children in ECE is therefore an important step to ensuring that vulnerable young children have access to the nurturing environments they need to thrive.

California Practitioners Advisory Group (CPAG)

Ensure that ongoing changes to California’s accountability and continuous improvement system take into account the needs of early learners, including Dual Language Learners.

Recommendation: Add a member to the California Practitioners Advisory Group (CPAG) that represents early childhood education and Dual Language Learner education and understands the differing perspectives for early education and K-12.

Rationale: The final regulations on the ESSA Accountability and State Plan include a stipulation that early childhood educators are to be included in the list of mandatory stakeholders with

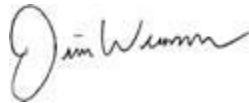
whom the state should consult regarding its plans. In section (iv)(b), the California Practitioners Advisory Group (CPAG) is mentioned as a group that CDE regularly meets to provide updates and receive feedback. Dual language learners/English learners are 22% of California's K-12 population and represent 57% of children age birth to five. A representative is needed that understands early childhood education and Dual Language Learner education.

Both ESSA and LCFF offer important opportunities to strengthen the alignment and integration of early childhood and the larger public school system and bring a much needed focus to best serving the large population of DLLs/ELs. We recommend that the State Plan takes these opportunities by explicitly including the above recommendations within the final version of the ESSA State Plan. This direction in the State Plan would maximize the gains and investments possible in the early childhood years and support the academic trajectory of our students with the result of increased high school graduation and college and career readiness for all California's students.

Respectfully,



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ⁱ Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M., Espinosa, L., Gormley, W. T., Ludwig, J., Magnuson, K., Phillips, D., & Zaslow, M (October, 2013) *Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool*, Society for Research in Child Development, Washington, D.C.

ⁱⁱ **Dual Language Learners** (DLLs) are children learning two (or more) languages at the same time, as well as those learning a second language while continuing to develop their first (or home) language. **English Learners** (ELs) are children who are in the process of actively acquiring English and whose primary language is one other than English. Experts focused on child development from birth to five utilize the term DLL and the EL term is more commonly used in the K-12 system. These terms are used interchangeably in this document.

ⁱⁱⁱ First 5 CA. (2016). Dual language learner pilot. Sacramento, CA. Retrived from:
http://www.cfc.ca.gov/pdf/commission/meetings/handouts/Commission-Handouts_2016-04/Item_11_-_Dual_Language_Learner_Pilot.pdf

^{iv} Castro, D. C., Garcia, E. E., Markos, A. (2013). *Dual language learners: Research informing policy*. Chapel Hill, NC: Frank Porter Graham Center; Halle, T., Whittaker, J., Zepeda, M. Anderson, R., Rodriques, L., Rothenberg, L, & Wessel, J. (2015). The socioemotional development of Dual Language Learners: Looking back at existing research and moving forward with purpose. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29 (4), 734-749.

^v Ehrlich, S.B. et al. (2013). *Preschool attendance in Chicago Public Schools: Relationships with learning outcomes and reasons for absences: Research summary*. Chicago, IL: Connolly, F. & Olson, L.. (2012). *Early elementary performance and attendance in Baltimore City Schools' pre-kindergarten and kindergarten*. Baltimore, MD: Baltimore Education Research Consortium.

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