

2016 California Children's Report Card

A survey of kids'
well-being &
a roadmap for
the future



CHILDREN NOW

Pro-Kid Means Anti-Poverty



We're told income inequality in California is among the highest in the US. We're told some families can't meet basic needs, even with two parents working full-time. We're told the dream of providing a better future for our kids is dying, replaced by an economic reality in which stable employment and a comfortable income are accessible to a few, while the majority are left behind.

What gets lost in these conversations is the most powerful solution: investing in quality programs for kids. Not only do children suffer disproportionately from

poverty, they also hold the key to ending it. Making sure all children have the supports they need to thrive will dramatically lower the poverty rate in the future.

We know the devastating impact poverty has on kids affecting a range of outcomes, from health, to brain development, to their chances of success in school. Over four million California children come from low-income households, and more than two million live below the poverty line. Those numbers are too big to ignore. The future of millions of children depends on California's ability to make smart, quality investments in children's well-being.

In this year's Report Card you'll find statistics that bear out what we're told about inequality and the widening opportunity gap kids face. For example, you'll read about disparities in school suspensions and expulsions for African American students, who are three times more likely to experience those disciplinary measures than white students. But you'll also find strong evidence that inequities can be addressed with smart policies, like investing in quality child care and preschool and reforms like the Local Control Funding Formula, which helps ensure that English language learners, kids in foster care and the more than three million low-income students in our state will have more resources directed to them.

California is a wealthy state, with more assets than most to devote to its children's well-being. It's time to put more of our resources to work for kids, by investing in quality programs to help lift them out of poverty and set them on the road to success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ted Lempert'.

Ted Lempert
President

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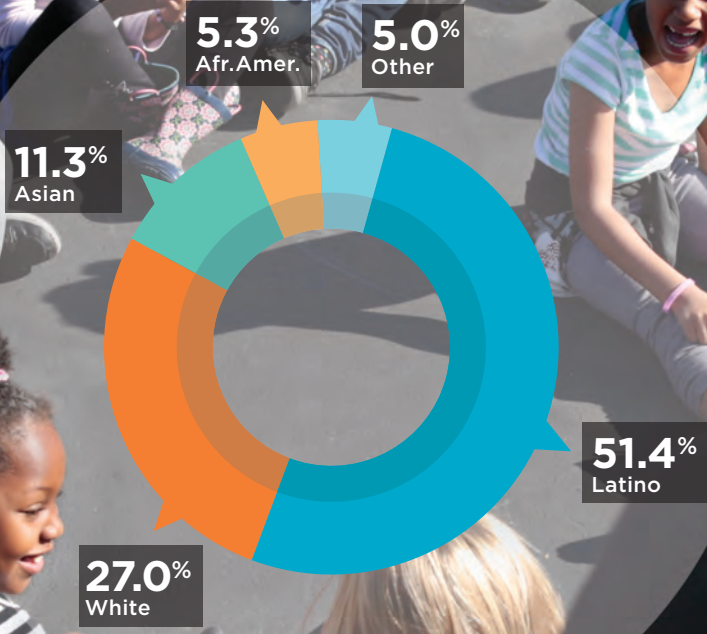
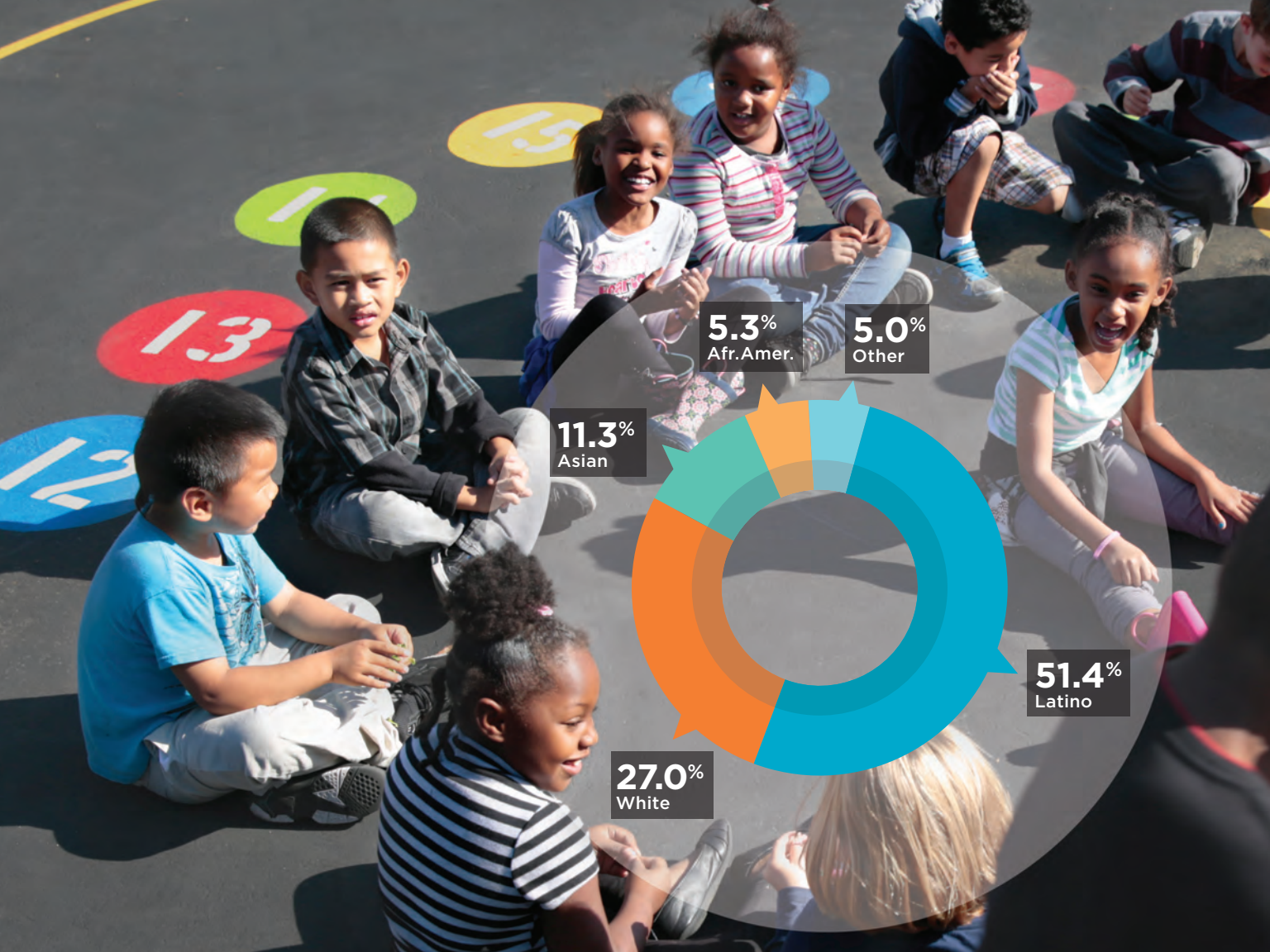
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California's Children¹

California is home to more than 9 million children.² With 12 percent of the nation's children, the well-being of California kids has a big impact on the well-being of children nationally.³ Unfortunately, California recently ranked 38th out of 50 states in children's well-being.⁴

Research has shown a strong connection between children's socioeconomic status and overall well-being.⁵ California ranks 49th on measures of kids' economic well-being, surpassing only Mississippi.⁶ While it is a prosperous state, around 1 in 4 California children lives in poverty.⁷

California is also one of the most diverse states in the US. The state's children are racially, ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse.⁸ Today, 1 in every 2 children are Latino,⁹ and 22 percent of students are English learners (EL)¹⁰ from at least 60 different language groups.¹¹ Nearly half the state's children (4.4 million)¹² live in immigrant families,¹³ and the majority of those (91%) are U.S. citizens.¹⁴

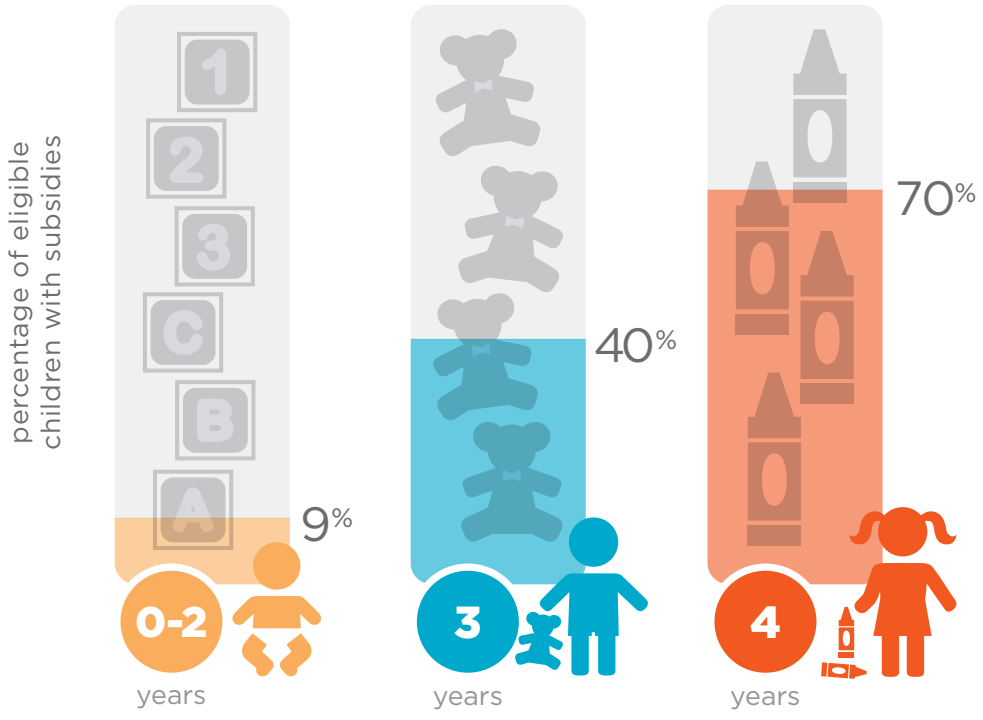
Yet research consistently finds large disparities in kids' well-being based on racial, ethnic and language background.^{15, 16} In a state as diverse as California, our future civic and economic well-being hinges on closing those gaps, and ensuring every child is healthy, well-educated and safe.



Infant & Toddler Care

Well-trained, nurturing caregivers foster healthy development in infants and toddlers.

Infants and toddlers are least likely to get help paying for childcare¹



Data Highlights



Between birth and three, babies' and toddlers' brain development is rapid and children are gaining many critical skills.² More than 80 percent of brain growth occurs before a kid's third birthday.³ Disparities for poor children begin to emerge in this period,⁴ and quality early care helps reduce these developmental gaps. But California isn't meeting the need for affordable child care.⁵ Currently our subsidies cover as little as 55 percent of the cost of care.⁶

Access: Nearly half of California's infants and toddlers are from families struggling to make ends meet⁷ and who rely on a variety of child care options. Currently, the majority of child care requests are for kids three and under.⁸ Yet, even with recent increases, state spending on infant and toddler care has decreased by 30 percent since the recession.⁹

Affordability: Infant and toddler care is more expensive than preschool. Child care can eat up over half of a minimum wage salary,¹⁰ but California only provides subsidies to nine percent of eligible babies and toddlers.¹¹

Quality: The quality of infant and toddler care can vary. In some cases the state sets very minimal or no standards.¹² Studies find that the younger a child, the less the caregiver is paid, regardless of their qualifications. This makes it hard to maintain caregiver continuity, which is vital to the quality care kids need.¹³

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California should help more families access high-quality, safe, reliable and enriching child care in a variety of settings for children ages birth to three and ensure our state's children, parents and caregivers are connected to community-based family supports and services.

Momentum



After years of budget cuts that ended infant and toddler child care subsidies for many struggling families, California is taking small but important steps toward improving access and ensuring affordable, quality care for the families that need it most. Currently, over 30,000 infants and toddlers are enrolled in a subsidized program.¹⁴ Soon an additional 7,000 new slots will be prioritized for infants and toddlers, and provider reimbursement rates will increase. But this still leaves the majority of the over 300,000 eligible kids without subsidies.¹⁵ The state has also dedicated one-time funding for improving program quality and increased funding for infants and toddlers with exceptional needs in early care and education settings. In addition, federal investments are helping Early Head Start programs in California expand services to pregnant women, children birth to three and their families, who are living in poverty.



Spotlight

Funding for low income infants and toddlers

To learn more about how Napa and Solano counties are using new federal funding to enhance child care options for low-income babies and toddlers, visit prokid.info/itcsi

grade
B-



Preschool

Children get a boost when preschool teachers are well-trained and programs build partnerships with families.

**California spends 12 times as much on prisoners
as it does on preschoolers¹**



\$4,981
per preschool student annually



\$62,300
per prisoner annually

Data Highlights



Quality preschool is important for all kids, but unlike kindergarten, preschool isn't universal in California. Attendance is especially critical for low-income children, who can arrive at elementary school nearly 14 months behind more affluent kids in school-readiness measures.²

Access: Many families struggle to find affordable, quality preschools. Public preschools provide access for a large number of low-income children, but only 19 percent of all three-year olds (95,751) and 32 percent of all four-year-olds (161,264) are enrolled in a public preschool program.^{3,4} In contrast, 90 percent of all five-year-olds (511,985) are enrolled in public kindergarten.⁵

Affordability: Cost is a significant barrier. A parent working full-time would spend almost half of a minimum wage salary on preschool.⁶ Many preschools struggle to keep their fees affordable because of increasing costs and relatively low state reimbursement rates.⁷

Quality: Studies show that long-term benefits of high-quality preschool include 1.3 fewer years in special education⁸ and a 40 percent higher likelihood of graduating high school.⁹ But only around 13 percent of California's low-income kids are in high-quality preschool.¹⁰ California's preschool standards promote program quality, but the state's program still ranks lower than 36 other states on select quality benchmarks.¹¹

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California must ensure every child has access to quality preschool, and capitalize on the recent expansion of state preschool and transitional kindergarten to achieve that goal, starting with low-income children.

Momentum



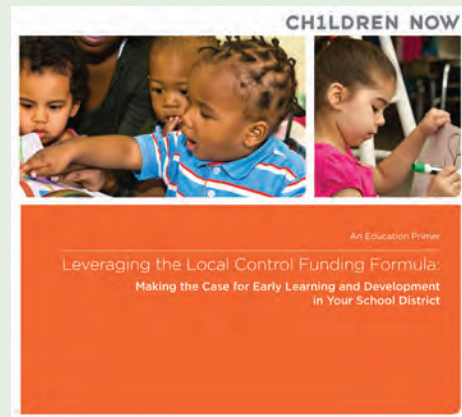
After several years of budget cuts, the state has made some significant new investments in preschool access, affordability and quality. The state preschool program expanded by 21,000 spaces and regulations for entry to transitional kindergarten were clarified so that more children can attend. Reimbursement rate increases for preschool providers will help ensure programs retain experienced teachers and can afford high-quality training and materials. The state has also continued investments in the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for state preschool programs to support workforce development and continuous quality improvement.



Spotlight

Leveraging Local Control Funding Formula dollars to expand preschool

To learn more about how school districts can utilize the new funding system to expand quality preschool opportunities, check out Children Now's primer at prokid.info/cneldlcf



grade

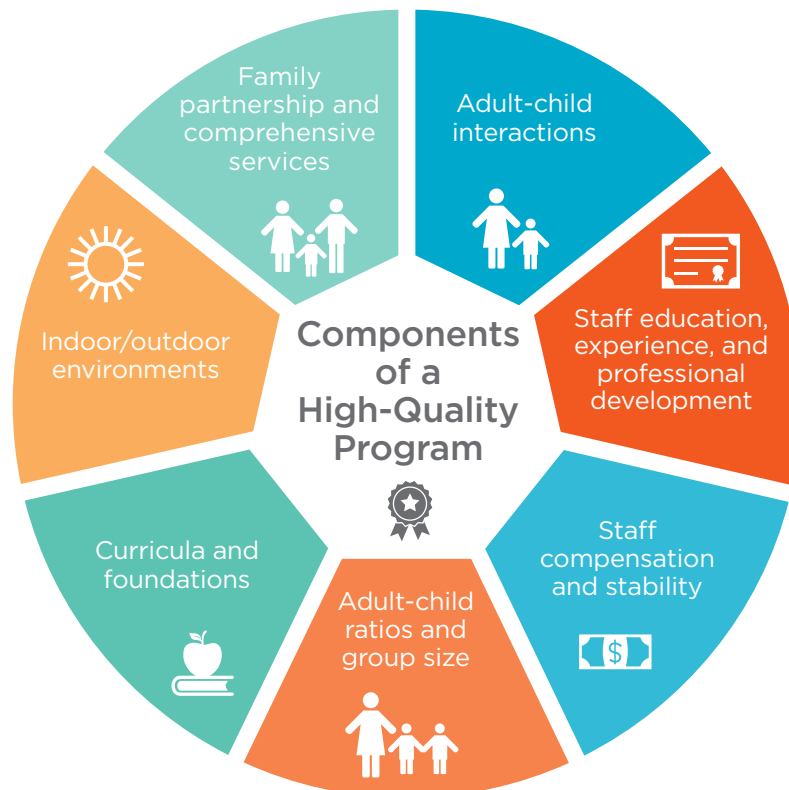
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Quality Improvement Systems

These systems ensure programs and providers keep improving their services to set kids on track for success.

Multiple components create high-quality early learning programs¹



Data Highlights



Teachers and caregivers need ongoing training and resources to help them consistently support young children and promote their development. Young kids in high-quality childcare or preschool settings experience enriching opportunities that advance their development and learning. High-quality early care and education has major benefits, including increased academic and life success,² but poor-quality settings don't deliver positive results³ and can even harm kids.⁴

California's early care and education programs must meet licensing requirements, but standards vary, sometimes only ensuring basic health and safety. Information on whether particular licensed settings provide the nurturing environment children need is limited, and less is known about unlicensed care provided by family, friends and neighbors.⁵

California's locally driven Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is a framework for assessing and improving the quality of licensed child care and preschool programs. QRIS is emerging as a key tool for ensuring program quality across the state. Over 2,000 centers and family child care homes across 45 counties are participating in this steadily growing system.⁶ Roughly 80 percent of infants and 40 percent of children under the age of six are cared for in settings not requiring a license (family, friends and neighbor care)⁷ and a significant portion of public child care funding supports this type of care,⁸ so efforts to better address the needs of these caregivers are also critical.⁹

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California must expand and coordinate existing program improvement initiatives, like QRIS, to create a consistent quality improvement system that ensures all programs and providers across the state have the resources they need to make a real difference in children's early learning and development.

Momentum



California has taken steps toward improving the quality of early learning opportunities by starting to create a more cohesive system of quality improvement resources. This includes funding QRIS with an ongoing \$50 million grant for state preschool programs and supporting infant and toddler caregivers with \$24 million in one-time funding. This funding will help ensure that more of California's youngest learners are getting the nurturing, consistent care they need for healthy development. Local First 5 investments, along with First 5 California's new IMPACT program, will leverage these grants and other funding sources to continue to expand QRIS and other quality improvement efforts. State agencies are also currently updating professional development requirements for early childhood workers, and preparing the state plan required for federal child care funding, giving California the opportunity to clearly define its long-term plan for building a quality early care and education system to benefit all children.



Spotlight

Increasing the quality of early learning programs

To learn more about Early Stars' quality improvement efforts in Fresno County, visit earlystars.org/about

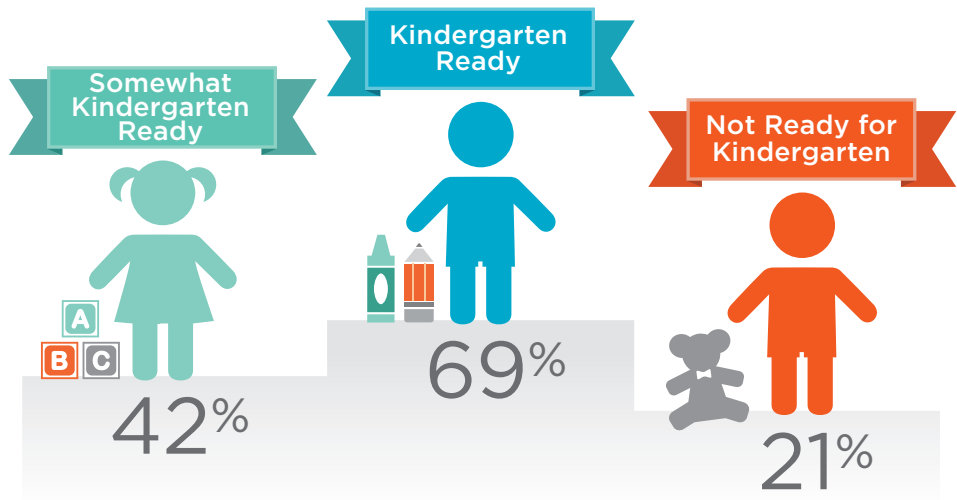
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B-



Kindergarten Transition

Transitional kindergarten, kindergarten readiness assessments and better pre-K-12 coordination ensure kids start school ready to learn.

Kindergarten readiness assessments help teachers know what students need to be successful in school¹



percent of kids successful in 3rd grade based on their kindergarten readiness

Data Highlights



Young children - particularly low-income children, kids of color and English learners - are at risk of falling behind without quality preschool or transitional kindergarten.^{2,3} Schools that coordinate between preschool and kindergarten and provide transitional kindergarten help kids build the skills needed to learn, thrive and succeed.⁴

Kindergarten readiness tools help coordinate the transition from preschool. They allow educators to tailor support for individual kids and help local decision-makers build programs around community needs.⁵ Currently, however, California isn't one of the 29 states consistently collecting readiness data.⁶

When California schools do assess the readiness of kindergartners, they rarely capture information on social-emotional development. This is problematic because research shows the connection between social-emotional readiness and long-term success. Kindergarten kids rated high in social competence are more likely to graduate high school, get a college degree and be employed by age 25.⁷

Only 45 percent of California 3rd graders read at grade-level.⁸ The number is lower for African American (34 percent)⁹ and Latino (33 percent) students,¹⁰ low-income kids (33 percent),¹¹ and English learners (18 percent).¹² California must work to improve its preschool and transitional kindergarten and increase kindergarten readiness so all students get a strong start.

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California must encourage stronger coordination between early learning programs and K-12 schools. The state should support the use of a common kindergarten readiness assessment, and ensure schools are collecting consistent data so policymakers can use the information to improve education for all kids.

Momentum



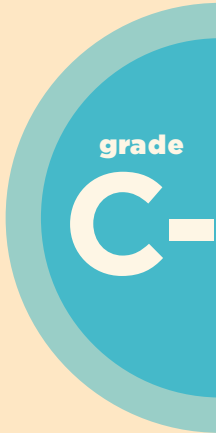
Transitional kindergarten (TK) can help prepare kids for school, but there's more schools must do to get our youngest learners on track for success. TK is new to California, and schools are still learning how best to deliver high-quality TK. Recent changes to age requirements mean more children are likely to attend transitional kindergarten in the future. To ensure schools are ready to serve these new students, a standard kindergarten readiness assessment tool should be adopted across districts. Both TK and traditional kindergarten could improve if schools had valid assessment data, and could tailor their teaching methods to meet their students' unique needs. In California, there are a few bright spots where communities have adopted kindergarten readiness assessment and support systems. But the patchwork approach means the state is unable to collect kindergarten readiness data, and isn't sure how many of our kids are starting school ready to learn.



Spotlight

Promoting a smooth transition to kindergarten

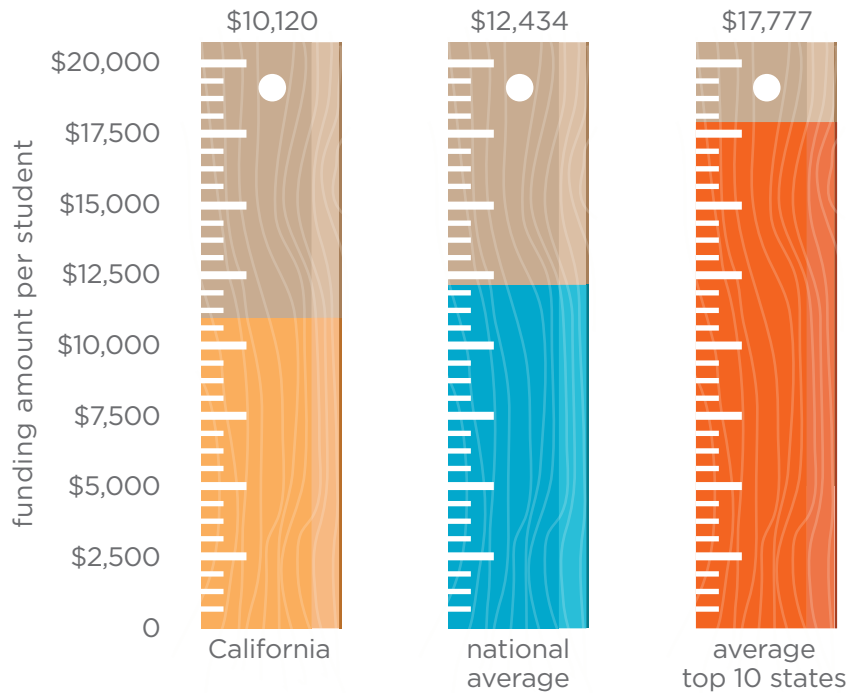
To learn more about First 5 Alameda County's School Readiness Initiative, visit prokid.info/ktffac



K-12 Funding

California should provide sufficient resources to ensure all students get a quality education.

California continues to lag behind in national comparisons of per pupil spending¹



Data Highlights



California has been underfunding its schools, and shortchanging its students, for decades.² In 2010-11, California fell to 49th among states on per-pupil spending.³ A recovering state economy and temporary tax increases have helped California schools regain ground after suffering steep cuts in past years. But California's per-pupil ranking only rose to 42nd nationally in 2014-15⁴ and per-pupil spending continues to trail behind the national average.⁵

Low funding means districts struggle to hire qualified teachers and to keep classes small, two factors that contribute to student success.^{6,7} In fact, according to the most recent data, California ranks 48th in student-to-teacher ratios,⁸ with over one million more students than Texas but 42,000 fewer teachers.⁹

School personnel like principals and vice principals, school nurses, counselors and librarians are also important in meeting kids' needs.¹⁰ Despite evidence of the necessity of school staff,¹¹ California ranks 45th or lower in every school staff category. In student-to-staff ratios, California ranks – 45th in principals or assistant principals, 49th in guidance counselors, and 50th in librarians.¹² In order to meet the national average for staffing, the state would need to hire 237,000 more school personnel.¹³

Pro-Kid® Policy Agenda



California must continue to increase funding for K-12 education so districts can provide every student with a high-quality education. With Proposition 30 revenues beginning to phase out, the state should put a funding solution in place so districts can provide all students with the opportunity to graduate from high school ready for college and the workforce.

Momentum



While California is still well below the national average in education funding, an improving economy and Proposition 30 revenues, nonetheless, are helping schools recover from the deep cuts of the recession. Over the last two years, the state has increased Proposition 98 K-12 funding by \$10.9 billion to a total of \$59.5 billion. In addition, California has provided billions in one-time funds to repay state mandates and other one-time costs. The most recent budget almost returns K-12 funding to pre-recession levels (2007-08) when adjusted for costs of living. But even with the significant recent investments, the current funding is far from adequate given the state's low per pupil spending. To keep our education promise to California kids, the State must significantly increase funding for our K-12 system.



Spotlight

Track and compare California's K-12 spending

To track per pupil spending over time and across states, visit the KIDS COUNT Data Center prokid.info/kcdcpe

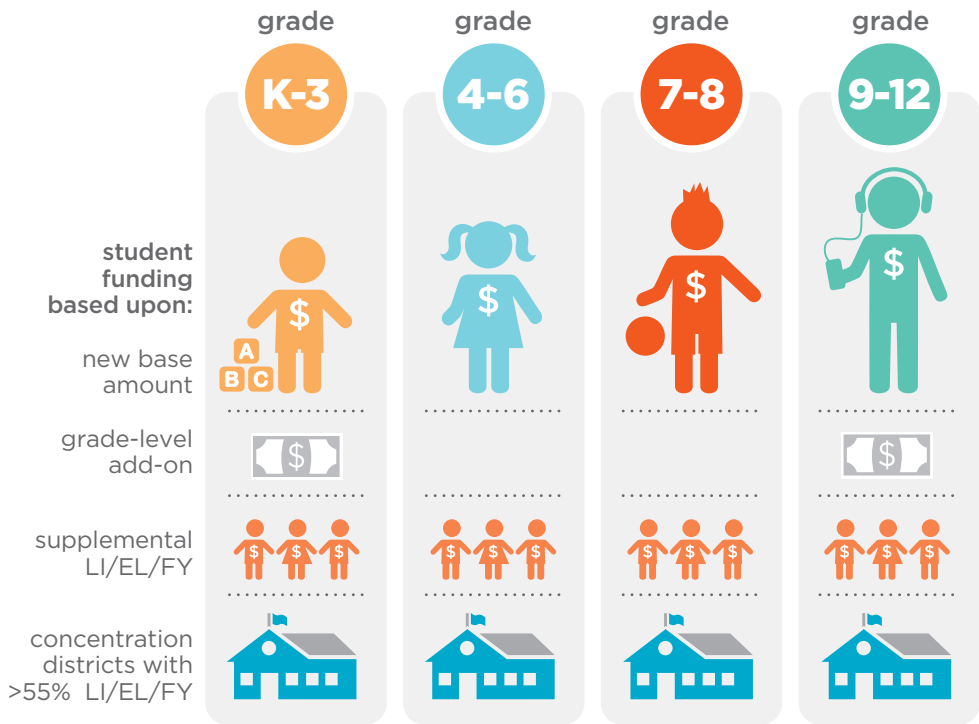
grade
B-



Local Control Funding Formula

This improved system provides more equitable school funding, with local flexibility and greater community engagement.

How the Local Control Funding Formula works for each student¹



LI = Low-Income EL = English Learners FY = Foster Youth

Data Highlights



The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), a comprehensive overhaul of California's school funding system, is seen as a national model for school funding equity. If California wants to close the achievement gap for low-income students, English learners and foster youth, schools will need more resources. The new funding formula provides additional dollars for districts to target the students most in need of extra support. The state will also provide additional grants to the 549 school districts where these students make up at least 55 percent of the enrollment.² That means more funding going to the students who need it most.

LCFF has shifted most of the budgeting, planning, and decision-making from the state to local school districts,^{3,4} meaning parents, students, local groups and educators get to decide what's best for kids in their communities. School districts now must work collaboratively with local stakeholders to create their annual plans, known as Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs). The plans must address eight key areas including student achievement and engagement, school climate, parental involvement and basic needs like facilities. LCAPs must also account for Common Core implementation and students' college and career readiness.⁵

The new funding formula is a recent reform, so the collaborative planning process and LCAP development are still works in progress. Districts and communities are working on new ways to allocate and manage district dollars and measure their success in meeting the specific needs of their communities' kids.^{6,7}

Pro-Kid® Policy Agenda



California should work to make sure schools are leveraging the flexibility created by the Local Control Funding Formula by engaging parents, collaborating with their communities and developing accountability plans that best serve their students' needs.

Momentum



The LCAPs are intended to give students and communities a stronger voice. But changes are still needed at both the state and local level for LCFF to truly deliver on its promise to California kids. The state needs additional changes to the LCAP requirements to make the plans more strategy-oriented and improve fiscal and planning transparency. The state is still developing performance expectations, which will be used for district self-review and to determine whether that district needs outside support. Currently, the state's accounting system doesn't allow people to clearly see how LCFF dollars are spent. In addition, LCFF creates a funding goal for each district, and while the budget provides an additional \$13.1 billion to help districts reach their funding goals, the state remains \$5.5 billion below target funding levels.⁸ At the local level, districts must decide how to define objectives and implement reforms in a cost-effective way, to improve education for all their students.



Spotlight

California's new funding system

To learn more about the Local Control Funding Formula, visit prokid.info/ca-sfr



grade
B-



State Standards

These standards set higher learning expectations to improve students' readiness for college, career and civic life.

Four skills necessary for college and career readiness



College & Career Ready



Core Content
Knowledge



Critical
Thinking



College & Career
Awareness



Employability &
Personal Interactions

Data Highlights



Californians have long been concerned about public school quality. Previous education standards didn't adequately prepare kids for college, careers and civic engagement. In 2014, only 37 percent of voters rated California's schools positively, and 85 percent thought it was important to raise standards so US students are more competitive in the global economy.¹

California's new standards for K-12 education will help students succeed in today's globalized job market.² The new standards, including Common Core and the Next Generation Science Standards, ensure California's high school graduates can problem solve and think critically, skills that 93 percent of voters say are necessary for success.³

Under the new standards, California students will also be better prepared for college.⁴ California has been spending \$1 billion dollars annually helping college students develop the skills they should have acquired in high school.⁵ Preparing students for college is especially important since more jobs are requiring education beyond high school;^{6,7} currently, California is projected to have a shortage of 1.5 million workers for jobs requiring "some college" by 2025.⁸

The new standards are already starting to benefit California students. The number of students participating in the Early Assessment Program (EAP), which measures readiness among 11th graders for California State University classes, increased in 2015. In English, EAP participation rates increased from 71 percent to 88 percent, and nearly 105,000 more students showed that they were ready or conditionally ready for college work, a solid improvement over previous years. In math, participation increased from 45 to 88 percent.⁹

Pro-Kid® Policy Agenda



California should continue working to fully implement our updated standards - the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science

Standards - to cultivate critical thinking skills and prepare students to be competitive in the global economy. The state should also work towards updating all other state standards to ensure they emphasize the skills students need to be successful in college, career and civic life.

Momentum



California is now better able to measure students' knowledge and skills to ensure our kids are ready for life after graduation.¹⁰ The Smarter Balanced Assessments, like the Common Core Standards, go beyond measures of content knowledge to assess critical thinking and problem solving. Kids take these tests on computers, which can adapt the test to each individual student. As students take the test, the questions' level of difficulty will adjust based on their responses, yielding a more precise measure of their knowledge and skills. In 2015, over 3.1 million students took the test for the first time, establishing the benchmark for measuring student progress in coming years.¹¹



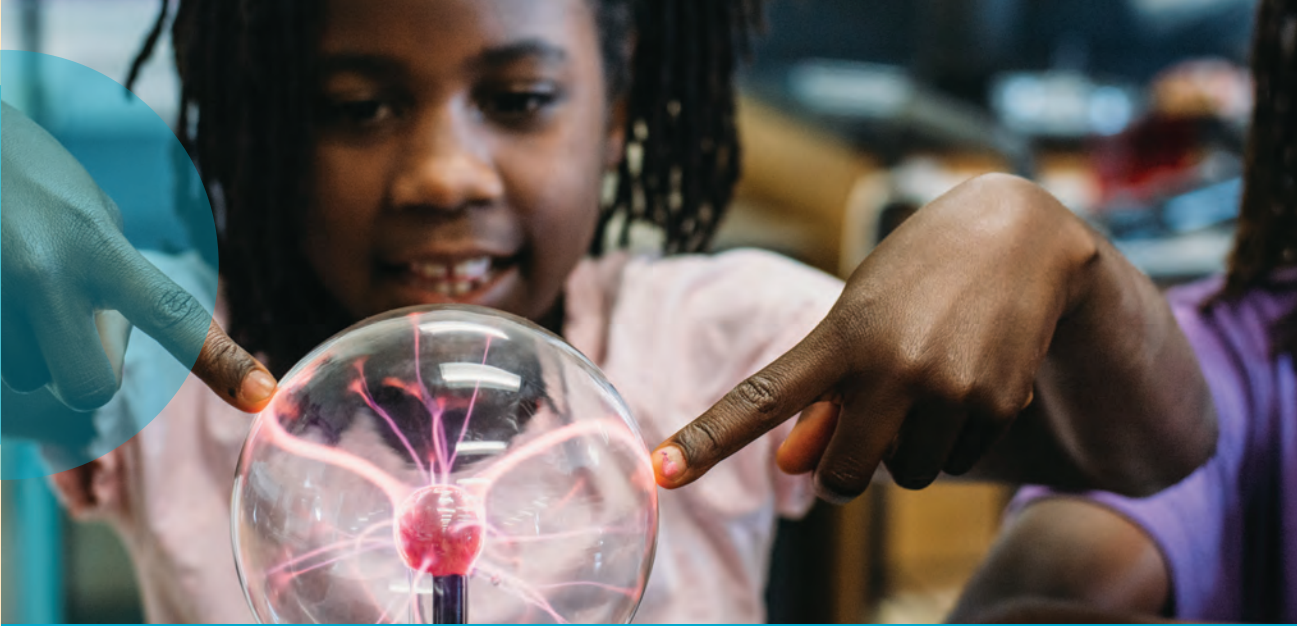
Spotlight

Engaging parents in new standards

To learn how the San Diego County Office of Education is communicating with parents about the new standards, visit prokid.info/sdcoecc

grade

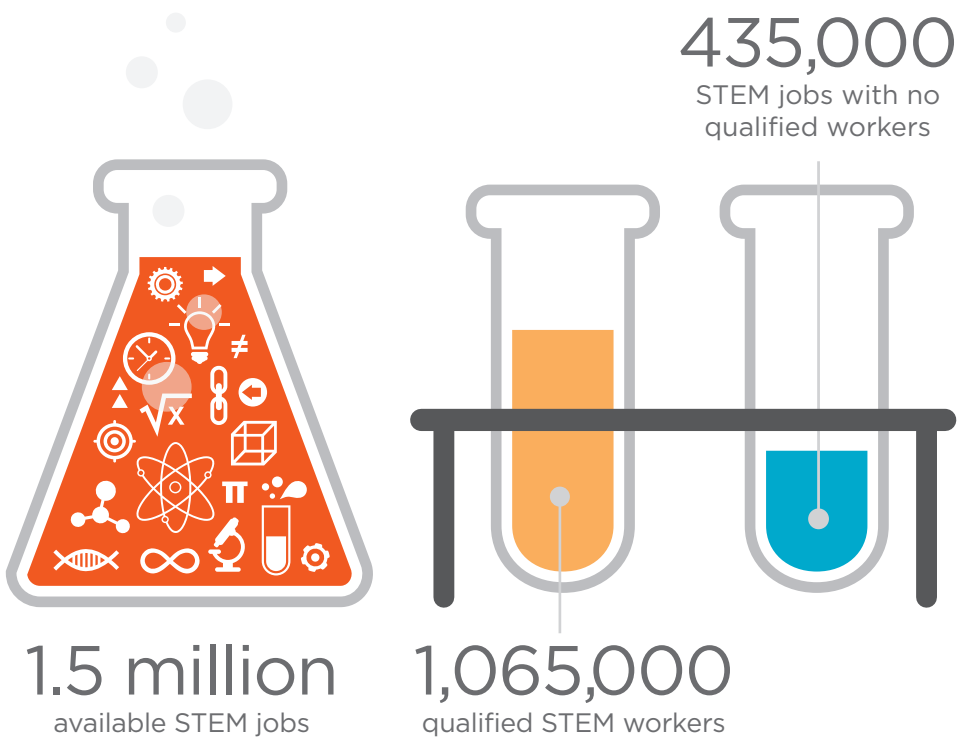
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STEM

STEM learning helps students master science, technology, engineering and math, to prepare them for 21st-century jobs.

In California, too many STEM jobs are going unfilled¹



Data Highlights



California students' need for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education is increasing rapidly. Seven of the ten fastest growing occupations are in STEM fields,² making STEM education a key part of career-readiness. We need engineers and scientists who are capable of tackling today's most complex problems, like climate change and declining water supplies. By teaching kids how to scientifically evaluate problems, we're ensuring that they will have the knowledge they need to tackle the most pressing global issues.³

Despite the importance of STEM education, many barriers stand between students and the full range of STEM curricula. The English language arts and skills-based math requirements in No Child Left Behind meant less instructional time was spent on science,⁴ technology and engineering.⁵ Currently, not all schools even offer courses critical to STEM: 25 percent of students attend schools that don't offer calculus, 15 percent attend schools that don't offer physics and ten percent attend schools with no chemistry classes.⁶ Limited professional development for teachers, inadequate learning materials, and insufficient opportunities for hands-on learning create additional barriers to STEM education.⁷

Quality STEM programs have positive effects that extend beyond the classroom. For example, 89 percent of students who participated in a STEM afterschool program reported an increase in self-confidence, 70 percent reported an increase in motivation to do well in school, and 80 percent reported an improved understanding of how science and technology work in everyday life.⁸

STEM programs have also demonstrated progress in closing achievement gaps.⁹ Participation in a year-long, STEM-focused program boosted the likelihood of African American students graduating from a four year college by 69 percent and Latino students by 83 percent.¹⁰

Pro-Kid® Policy Agenda



California should make broad exposure to science, technology, engineering and math a core element of every child's education. We must work to ensure all students, especially those in disadvantaged districts, are supported in their STEM education and have the opportunity to pursue these challenging professions.

Momentum



California students now have more and better opportunities to access quality STEM education, which is essential for them to compete in the global economy. The Common Core State Standards raised expectations for achievement in math. Now, the Next Generation Science Standards will teach science and engineering in a way that's relevant to the challenges of today's world, with topics like clean energy production and space exploration. The new approach to STEM education engages students in the classroom, and will help them attain rewarding, well-paying jobs after graduation.



Spotlight

Creating a regional vision for STEM

To learn how the CREATE STEM Success Initiative is creating a K-20 vision for STEM in San Diego, go to prokid.info/uc-stem

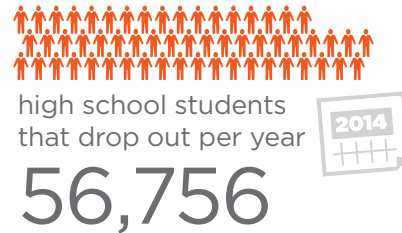
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K-12 Outcomes

The State is accountable for ensuring that all of California's K-12 students are graduating from high school ready for college, career and civic life.

Every California student needs a high quality education¹



Data Highlights



California's 6.2 million students² lag behind nationally on achievement measures; in the most recent assessments, California ranked 46th in 4th grade reading and 42nd in 8th grade math.³ Much more can be done to ensure that every child gets a high-quality education that prepares them for college, career and civic life. Eight in ten California students graduate on time,⁴ but only 42 percent of graduates complete the minimum entrance requirements for University of California and California State University schools.⁵ These figures are even lower for Latino (32 percent) and African American (31 percent) students.⁶

The Smarter Balanced Assessments, part of the state's new testing system, hold California students to more rigorous standards when assessing critical thinking, problem solving and writing skills. The 2015 results indicated that across grade levels only 44 percent of students met or exceeded state standards for English Language Arts and fewer, 33 percent, were able to meet or exceed math standards. Moreover, English Language Arts assessments for 11th graders revealed that only 56 percent of students were considered ready or conditionally ready for college level work and math assessments demonstrated only 29 percent were ready or conditionally ready for college level math.⁷

A number of non-academic factors, like school connectedness, contribute to school success.⁸ These factors can highlight significant disparities affecting students' well-being. Only 34 percent of African American students and 42 percent of Latino students feel a high level of school connectedness, compared to over 54 percent of white students,⁹ meaning many students of color aren't getting the support they need to succeed.

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California should ensure every child graduates from high school ready for college, career and civic life by establishing a system of school accountability.

This system should include information for all stakeholders, rigorous and achievable expectations for students and educators, supports to foster continuous improvement, and interventions when necessary – all with a focus on student success. When improvement is needed, California must ensure all schools, districts, charters and county offices can access timely and locally tailored supports, so they can effectively meet the needs of all students.

Momentum



The passage of the Local Control Funding Formula legislation was a step toward meeting California students' needs, but more must be done. The State Board of Education has been working to develop a new accountability framework to track the success of each student entering the state's K-12 system, and efforts to update laws and regulations currently in place to measure student success should begin in 2016. In its new accountability system, California will build on several components created by the Local Control Funding Formula legislation. While this accountability system has been in transition for several years, parents and students should soon see a framework that will effectively assess how kids are doing, and inform how schools improve.



Spotlight

A comprehensive approach to accountability

To learn how the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) districts are using an accountability model to ensure student success, go to prokid.info/squalsw

grade

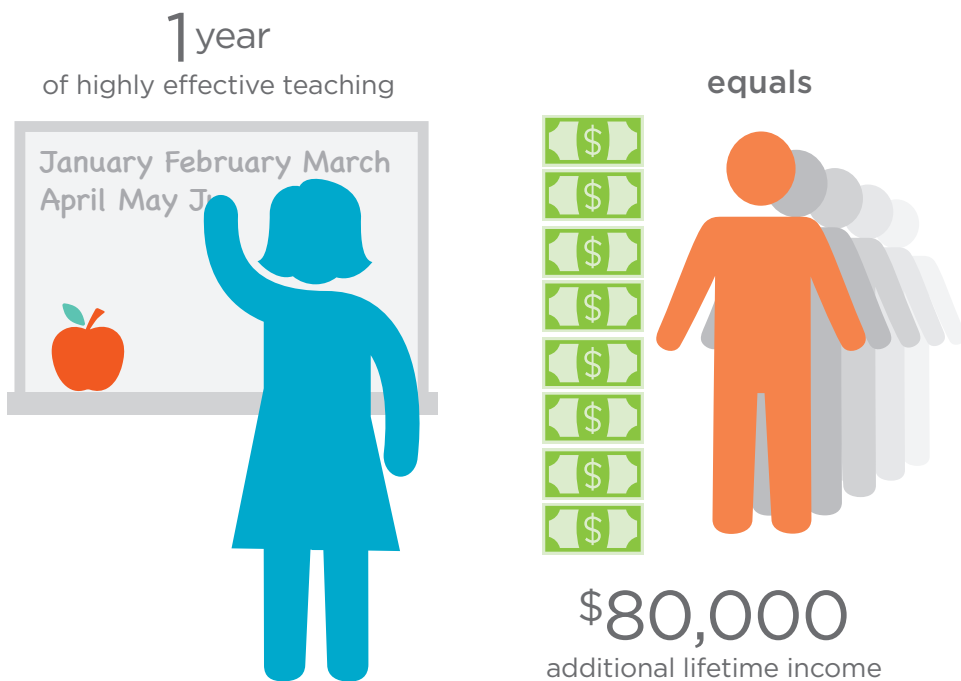
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Teacher Training & Evaluation

When teachers are well trained and fairly evaluated, students benefit from higher-quality instruction.

Kids that receive effective instruction are more likely to go to college and increase their lifetime income¹



Data Highlights



High-quality teachers can have a huge impact on student achievement.² An effective teacher helps students learn to think critically and develop their own opinions, in addition to other skills that are vital to success in school and throughout their careers.³

Ineffective teachers, on the other hand, can contribute to students' falling behind in school.⁴ In low-income schools, the percentage of novice teachers - those with less than three years' experience - is twice that of high-income districts.⁵ One study in Los Angeles found that low-income students and students of color are up to three times more likely to have ineffective teachers than high-income, white, or Asian students.⁶

Quality training programs can make a significant difference in teacher effectiveness, with one study showing that novice teachers from strong programs contributed the equivalent of 2.5 more months of learning to their students when compared to graduates of weaker programs.⁷ Teacher evaluations are another way to strengthen instruction, but most districts fail to provide teachers with the feedback they need to improve.⁸ Additionally, many districts don't include measures of student achievement in evaluations of teachers,⁹ missing out on a critical opportunity to improve California kids' experience in the classroom.

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California should ensure that all students receive quality instruction by updating programs preparing future teachers while also providing new teachers with meaningful and objective feedback to benefit the state's most disadvantaged and struggling schools and students.

Momentum



California students deserve qualified and effective teachers in every classroom, but this is not the reality for many students. A recent court ruling concluded that California's policies regarding seniority, dismissal and tenure disproportionately harm the learning of poor and minority students. Some modest progress is being made, as the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing is working to improve teacher preparation, so all kids can have a high-quality learning experience.



Spotlight

Peer assessment in teacher evaluation

To learn how San Jose Unified is evaluating teachers, go to prokid.info/eisjud

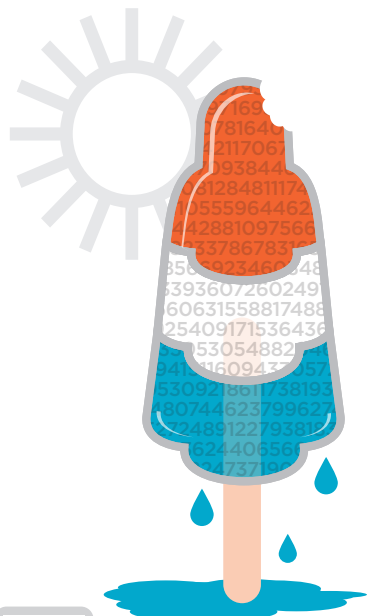
grade
B-



Afterschool & Summer Learning

Quality summer, before and afterschool programs help kids stay on track and not lose ground during out-of-school time.

Summer learning loss for students¹



3x2=6
3x3=9

2 months

of math skills are lost for all students



2^{or} more months

of reading achievement is lost for low-income students

Data Highlights



Providing high-quality afterschool and summer learning opportunities that build off the school day and year can help reduce the achievement gap, provide enrichment and promote students' success.² California has one of the highest participation rates in the country in afterschool programs, serving around 1.7 million low-income children.³ Still, 49 percent of students who could benefit continue to lack access to state funded afterschool.⁴

Children whose families can't afford summer learning programs lose some of the knowledge and skills acquired during the school year.⁵ By ninth grade this accumulated loss accounts for nearly two-thirds of the achievement gap, putting low-income kids, English learners and students of color substantially behind their peers.⁶ Expanded learning can help change this disturbing trend; for example, quality summer programs targeted to low-income kids have been shown to help reduce the achievement gap between them and more affluent students.⁷

Quality afterschool programs can also support learning in the classroom. In an evaluation of the School-Based After School Partnership in the Oakland Unified School District, 90 percent of students reported that they were getting help with homework and learning time-management skills.⁸ Students who participated in the San Diego After School Regional Consortium also demonstrated significant benefits. They were 80 percent less likely to be chronically absent than their peers, and 72 percent of them reported that the programs helped them perform better in school.⁹ In addition, 74 percent of parents said programs promoted positive behavior.¹⁰ Investing in quality afterschool and summer learning programs promotes kids' success in and out of the classroom.

Pro-Kid® Policy Agenda



California should continue to build and sustain proven afterschool and summer programs, so all children have access to these valuable expanded learning opportunities. State and local communities should work to link the traditional school day with expanded learning programs.

Momentum



California has the largest publicly funded afterschool system in the country, which gives many California students access to learning opportunities that extend beyond the school day. But the state isn't serving all the kids who could benefit most. To increase access to quality programs, the California Department of Education's Expanded Learning Time strategic plan creates a roadmap for the state and program providers. This multi-year effort aims to improve quality by creating a coordinated system of support, and by providing clear guidance on quality standards and program requirements.



Spotlight

Summer Learning in California

To learn about summer programs across California, visit Summer Matters at prokid.info/sum2u

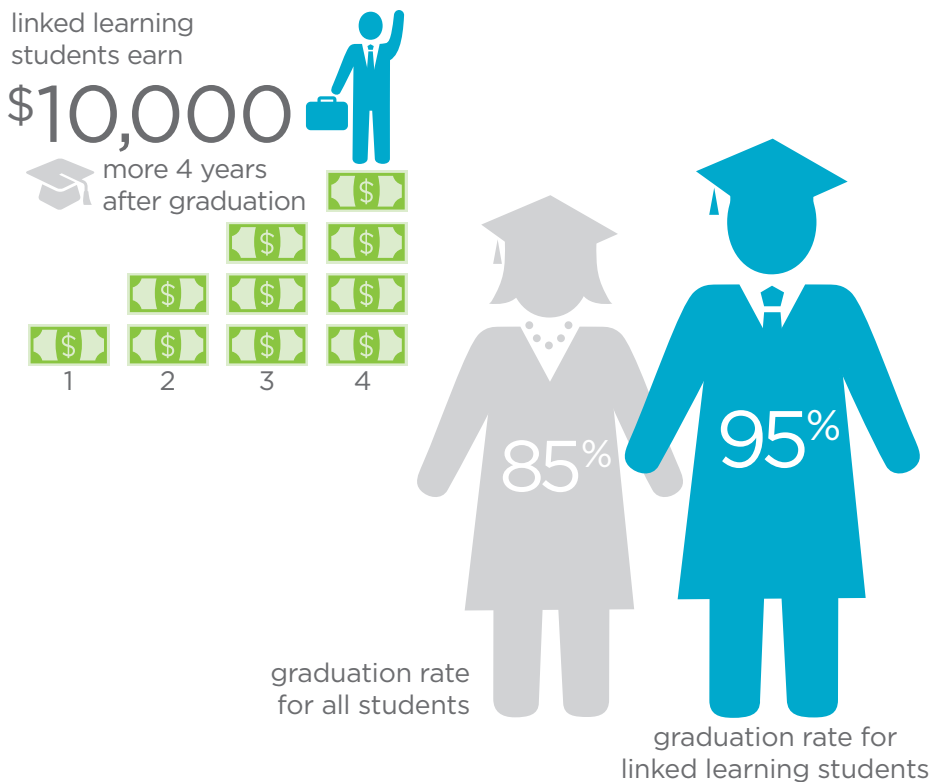
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B



Linked Learning

These programs help students succeed with rigorous academics, career-based learning and real-world experiences.

Linked Learning increases graduation rates and the earnings of young men four years after high school¹



Data Highlights



Over 60 percent of U.S. jobs require a college degree or some training beyond high school, a proportion that is expected to grow.² But in California, around 12 percent of our students drop out of high school.³ The tens of thousands of young people who drop out every year are left with a smaller chance of securing a job, which will cost the state at least \$22 billion over their lifetimes since dropouts are more likely to have poor health, be involved in the criminal justice system, have lower taxable income and need welfare support.⁴

Linked Learning pathways, currently operating in 63 school districts, prepare students for college and jobs by integrating career-oriented classwork with real-world work experience and personalized support. Research shows that students in certified Linked Learning pathways are 56 percent more likely to work well on a team, 59 percent more likely to improve public speaking skills and 24 percent more likely to develop a system for organizing schoolwork than non-participants.⁵

Linked Learning pathways also help improve graduation rates. Ninety-five percent of seniors who attended the California Partnership Academies graduated from high school, versus 85 percent of their peers in high schools without a similar program.⁶ Also, nine percent more Linked Learning students attended four-year postsecondary education compared to their traditional high school peers,⁷ showing that these programs benefit kids in high school and beyond.

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



The state should expand Linked Learning across California to make sure all high school students have access to rigorous academics alongside career-based learning, real-world work experiences and personalized student support.

Momentum



Since 2012, students across California have benefited from the expansion of Linked Learning. The State recently invested \$250 million to fund the California Career Pathways Trust, a grant program that will allow even more students to benefit from Linked Learning by encouraging local partnerships with employers and postsecondary institutions. There are currently over 850 pathways using certified Linked Learning models to connect students to college and careers, and over the next three years budget and policy changes will continue to increase student access to Linked Learning opportunities.



Spotlight

Preparing kids for college and career

To learn more about Linked Learning programs, visit prokid.info/ll-ca

grade

C



Blended Learning

When educators use technology to improve and individualize teaching, students can benefit with greatly improved learning.

Technology is changing the way kids learn



Collaborative Learning



Individualized Instruction



Active Learning

Data Highlights



Introducing kids to technology can be a powerful learning tool. Students using technology in the classroom have better attitudes toward learning and have better access to individualized learning. This is particularly important for students with special needs or risk factors, and ultimately improves students' test scores.¹

Comfort and familiarity with technology is also a critical job-readiness skill. In California, the growing tech industry currently employs nearly eight percent of the state's private sector workforce.²

California schools aren't keeping pace with new approaches to learning and a changing job market. Widespread adoption of technology in classrooms is hindered by a lack of resources, infrastructure and training. California schools only provide an average of one computer for every 5.6 students.³ Only six percent of schools have a school-specific IT specialist.⁴ And while almost 80 percent of California schools are connected to the Internet through California's K-12 High Speed Network,⁵ rural schools still have slower, less efficient Internet connections.⁶ Only two out of three teachers feel their school does a good job providing them with technology training and resources.⁷

In Riverside Unified School District, every student benefits from a 1:1 technology program providing 25,000 devices and coordinating parent and teacher technology orientations. This program is increasing student engagement and test scores; one year of a tech-based math program improved students' algebra scores by 19 percent.⁸

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California should leverage technology to increase student engagement and advance learning by eliminating existing policy and regulatory barriers, building the 21st century infrastructure needed to fully integrate

technology, and supporting professional development and training in this area.

Momentum



There are some examples of California schools and districts successfully using technology to improve learning and increase access to courses, but the use of technology in classrooms isn't universal. Still, there are promising early steps in state policy. California invested in the state's infrastructure to allow teachers to use technology in new approaches to learning. The State also designated \$77 million to strengthen schools' broadband technology infrastructure in preparation for the new Smarter Balanced computer adaptive assessments. Finally, the California Department of Education created "Digital Chalkboard", an online information-sharing community for educators.



Spotlight

Blended Learning engages and energizes students

To learn how the Riverside Unified School District is using technology, visit prokid.info/rusdtbl



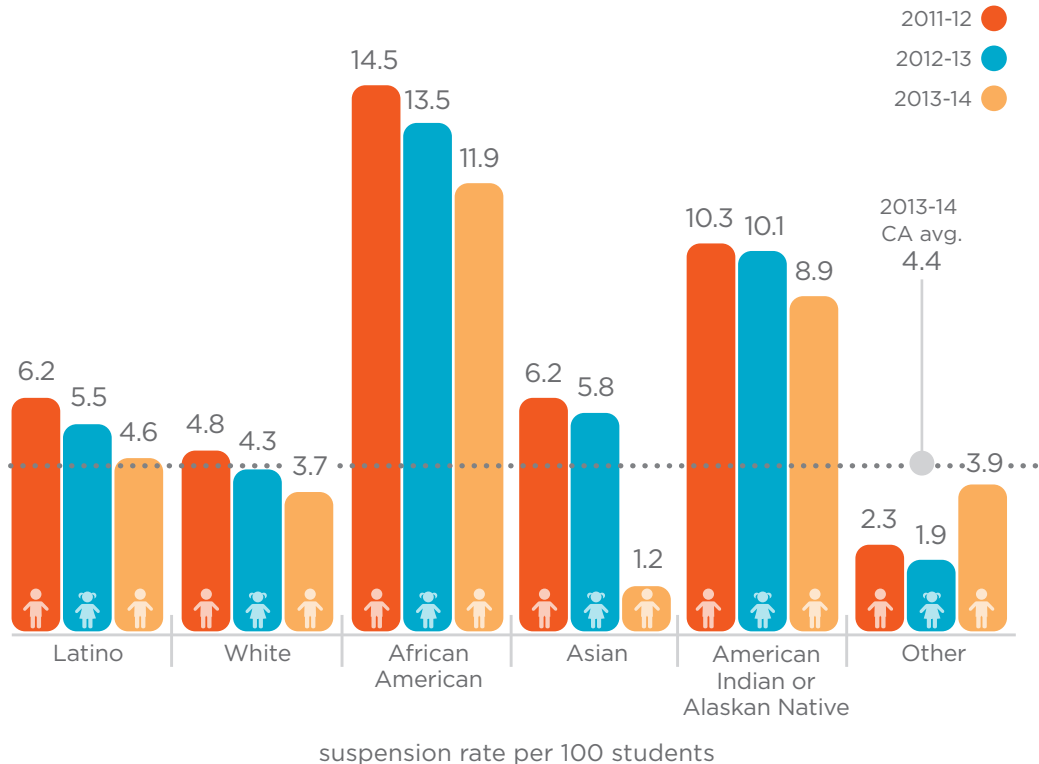
grade

C

School Climate & Discipline

Inclusive, student-centered practices increase kids' safety, well-being and sense of connectedness.

Over the past three years California has reduced student suspension rates, but racial and economic disparities continue¹



Data Highlights



Students in positive school climates feel safe at school, connected to peers and supported by teachers and staff. They also do better academically,² are more likely to graduate,³ and are less likely to participate in risk-taking behaviors like drug use and gang involvement.^{4,5} Despite the importance of school climate, only 45 percent of students in California feel highly connected to their school—a key indicator of a positive climate.⁶

Students who have been expelled or suspended are six times more likely to repeat a grade, five times more likely to drop out of high school, and three times more likely to have contact with the juvenile justice system.⁷ Yet, over 500,000 suspensions were issued in California schools during the 2013-14 school year.⁸

Reducing suspensions and expulsions is a critical way to improve school climate. Unfair, punitive school discipline policies negatively impact kids and disproportionately affect historically underserved students, including English language learners, students with disabilities and African American students.⁹ For example, African American students are up to three times more likely to be suspended than their peers.¹⁰

Alternatives, like restorative justice practices, which encourage respect, strengthen relationships and still hold students accountable, can lead to lower suspension and expulsion rates and improve school climate, attendance, and student achievement.¹¹ In 2012, Oakland Unified School District expanded schoolwide restorative justice programs to select middle and high schools. Since this time, participating schools have cut suspension rates by half from 34 to 14 percent, decreased chronic absence among middle school students by nearly 25 percent and increased four-year high school graduation rates from 45 to 72 percent.¹² Alternative discipline models are also linked to higher student achievement, making it the better choice for schools and for our state's kids.¹³

Pro-Kid® Policy Agenda



California should improve school climate and student engagement by working to eliminate inequitable suspension and expulsion policies, which result in the loss of valuable instructional time. The state should overhaul teacher and administrator training and professional development to emphasize positive discipline practices and to increase awareness of how trauma can be a contributing factor to behavioral issues.

Momentum



In the last few years, California has made notable progress in reducing student suspensions and expulsions. This is partially due to a new state law banning suspensions for willful defiance, a subjective category of overly broad and minor offenses, for K-3rd grade, and expulsions based on willful defiance for all students. The new law is especially important for students of color, LGBT students and students with disabilities who are disproportionately impacted by suspension and expulsion.¹⁴ Some districts, including San Francisco and Los Angeles Unified School Districts, have banned willful defiance suspensions for all grades. This will help ensure California children don't miss out on valuable class time for minor offenses. More training and stronger efforts to eliminate willful defiance suspensions in the upper grades are still needed.



Spotlight

Restorative practices in schools

To learn more about alternative discipline policies, visit Fix School Discipline at fixschooldiscipline.org

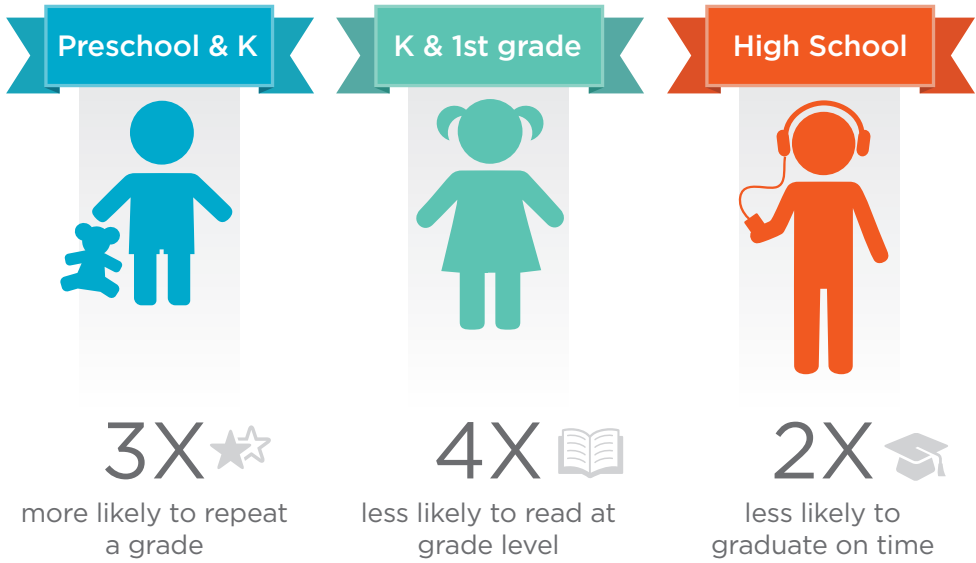
grade
C+



Chronic Absence

When students miss ten percent or more of the school year, they are more likely to fall behind and drop out.

When kids are chronically absent in:¹



Data Highlights



When children are absent from school, they miss valuable opportunities for academic, social and emotional development.² When a child misses ten percent of their school days, typically 18 or more days per year, they're considered chronically absent. This can be an early warning sign for other struggles in school.³ Students who are chronically absent are less likely to graduate from high school and 28 percent less likely to enroll in college.⁴

Roughly ten percent of kindergartners are chronically absent,⁵ putting them at greater risk of falling behind. Kids who are chronically absent in both preschool and kindergarten are at least three times more likely to repeat a grade.⁶

Low-income students are especially affected by barriers to good attendance such as lack of transportation, poor health or frequent school changes. One study found that low-income kids are 30 percent more likely to be chronically absent than their more affluent peers.⁷

Roosevelt Middle School in Oakland tried one approach to reducing chronic absence by tracking chronically absent students and working collaboratively with their families to create plans to improve their children's attendance. In one year, rates of chronic absences were cut nearly in half, and overall academic performance at the school increased to its highest level in 14 years.⁸

Pro-Kid® Policy Agenda



California needs to make sure children aren't missing out on their education by examining new school policies and revising those that result in lost instruction time. Chronic absenteeism should be monitored closely, and schools and communities should use the information to make meaningful changes to improve attendance and accountability.

Momentum



Chronic absence is a key predictor of students' future academic performance, so it's critical for the state, districts and schools to identify kids who are chronically absent and thus at greater risk of struggling academically. With the state's current tracking system, there is no way to know how many students are chronically absent, who those students are and which schools have the highest rates of chronic absence. The state should replace its current attendance tracking system with one that monitors chronic absence and tracks school-level and student-level attendance. Even with incomplete state data, we can see improvements in districts that are using holistic approaches to chronic absence to improve attendance and student success.

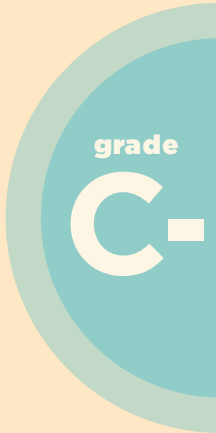


Spotlight

Addressing chronic absence

To learn how to address chronic absence at your school, visit Attendance Works at attendanceworks.org



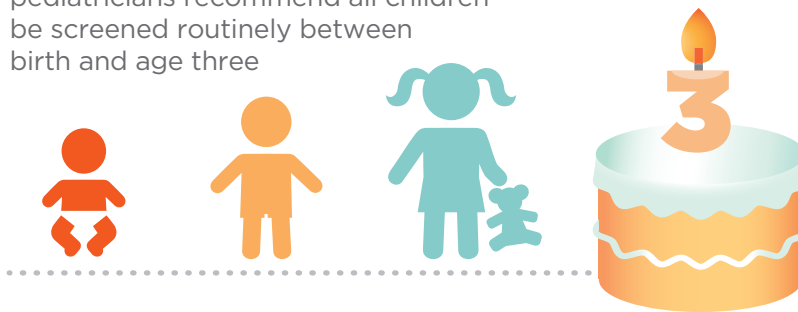


Developmental Screenings & Intervention

Screenings help professionals identify potential delays or concerns, and match infants and toddlers with the appropriate intervention services and supports to promote their learning and growth.

Too few infants and toddlers are receiving critical developmental and behavioral screenings¹

pediatricians recommend all children be screened routinely between birth and age three



fewer than 1 in 3

young children in California receive timely developmental screenings

Data Highlights



Early intervention services have big payoffs for children's development and school readiness. Many infants and toddlers who are identified with developmental delays or disabilities and receive formal early intervention show improved social and cognitive skills – key components of school readiness² – and higher academic achievement than those who don't get services.³ One study reported that one-third of infants and toddlers who received early intervention did not require additional intervention upon entering elementary school.⁴

All infants and toddlers should get routine developmental and behavioral screenings as part of well-child care. Yet only 29 percent of California parents report their infants and toddlers received developmental screenings during health care visits.⁵

If all 1.5 million California children birth to three years old⁶ got the recommended screenings, an estimated 166,000 (11 percent) would need referrals for further assessment, and might need more intensive support.⁷ But Early Start, the state's early intervention program for the highest-need kids, only serves about 20 percent (less than 35,000) of California kids in need.⁸

Getting kids the help they need can be challenging for parents, and referral services, such as Help Me Grow, can help connect families with community-based supports. In one study of Help Me Grow in Alameda County, the majority of parents felt they had a better understanding of their child's development (93 percent), and more connections to services (95 percent) due to support from Help Me Grow.⁹

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California should ensure all infants and toddlers get routine developmental and behavioral screenings, and support pediatricians, other health care providers and early childhood experts in monitoring children's development.

When kids need intervention, the state should work to guarantee timely, high-quality systems that assess and treat young children, coordinate services and engage and support parents and caregivers in their children's treatment.

Momentum



Three factors prevent California's infants and toddlers from getting necessary early intervention services. First, routine developmental and behavioral screenings aren't happening for all young kids. Second, there's a shortage of specialized early intervention services. Third, the complexity of the system is difficult for families to navigate. Recognizing this reality, 38 state legislators pressured the California Health and Human Services Agency to improve the quality and accessibility of developmental and behavioral screenings and the subsequent referral process. The Legislature also unanimously passed a resolution declaring the state's commitment to early intervention and setting the stage for new policies to ensure all California kids get the screenings and supports they need to thrive. In recent state budgets, there have been modest re-investments, like the reversal of a 2009 cut to the Early Start program. Still, a stronger collective effort at state, local and federal levels is needed.



Spotlight

Comprehensive and coordinated intervention

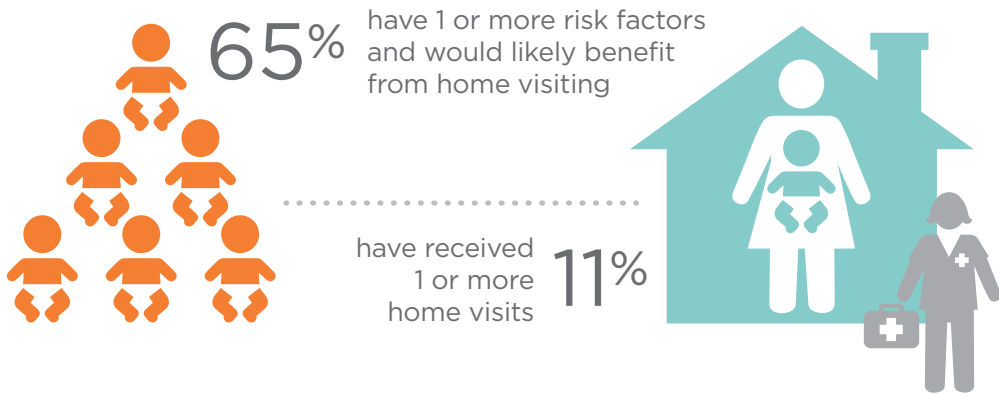
To learn more about San Diego County's early intervention services, visit prokid.info/declinic



Voluntary Home Visiting

Ongoing tailored support for new and expectant parents improves maternal and infant health and family stability.

Many families could benefit from voluntary home visiting, but too few are getting these services¹



Data Highlights



Too many California families face challenges that compromise the well-being of children and their caregivers. Nearly half our state's infants and toddlers live in low-income families² and 37 percent of California families enrolled in cash aid programs have at least one child under three.³ Home visiting programs match new and expectant parents with trained staff to connect families with important resources in the early years, strengthening the crucial parent-child relationship and having a lifelong impact on families and kids. Studies show that home visiting programs can yield a return up to \$5.70 for each dollar invested in them.⁴

Mothers receiving home visits during pregnancy were 47 percent less likely to deliver low birth-weight babies,⁵ saving up to \$40,000 for each improved birth outcome.⁶ If California reduced its current low birth-weight rate just by half, the state could save up to \$675 million a year.⁷

Home visiting can strengthen family self-sufficiency, and help build the skills needed to parent successfully. Mothers who participated in the Nurse-Family Partnership program reported feeling prepared to make good choices about education, jobs and relationships.⁸ Low-income women who received home visits while looking for work were twice as likely to find employment.⁹

The benefits of home visiting persist when kids enter school. Children who participated in the Healthy Families America home visiting program were 50 percent less likely to repeat first grade than kids who didn't participate. They were also more likely to have key school readiness skills like working cooperatively and following instructions.¹⁰

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



The state should expand voluntary home visiting programs by identifying sustainable funding, ensuring programs are effective and of high quality,

prioritizing families most in need of support, and ensuring programs meet the diverse needs of families.

Momentum



Currently, over 90 percent of children in the state do not have access to home visiting programs.¹¹ However, there are efforts to ensure that home visiting is accessible throughout the state, including investments by First 5 Commissions which provide home visiting to over 24,000 families each year. And since 2011, federal funding has allowed the California Home Visiting Program to partner with counties to serve another 4,000 families - but only in 24 of California's 58 counties. Current capacity falls far short of need. At minimum, all new and expectant parents who are on Medi-Cal should have the opportunity to have a trusted home visitor to support them if they so choose. To increase home visiting availability and accountability across the state, California should build on existing efforts and bring together public and private partners to identify how California might offer home visiting to every family that needs and wants it.



Spotlight

First 5 Los Angeles Welcome Baby

To learn more about the First 5 Los Angeles Welcome Baby home visiting program visit prokid.info/f5lawel

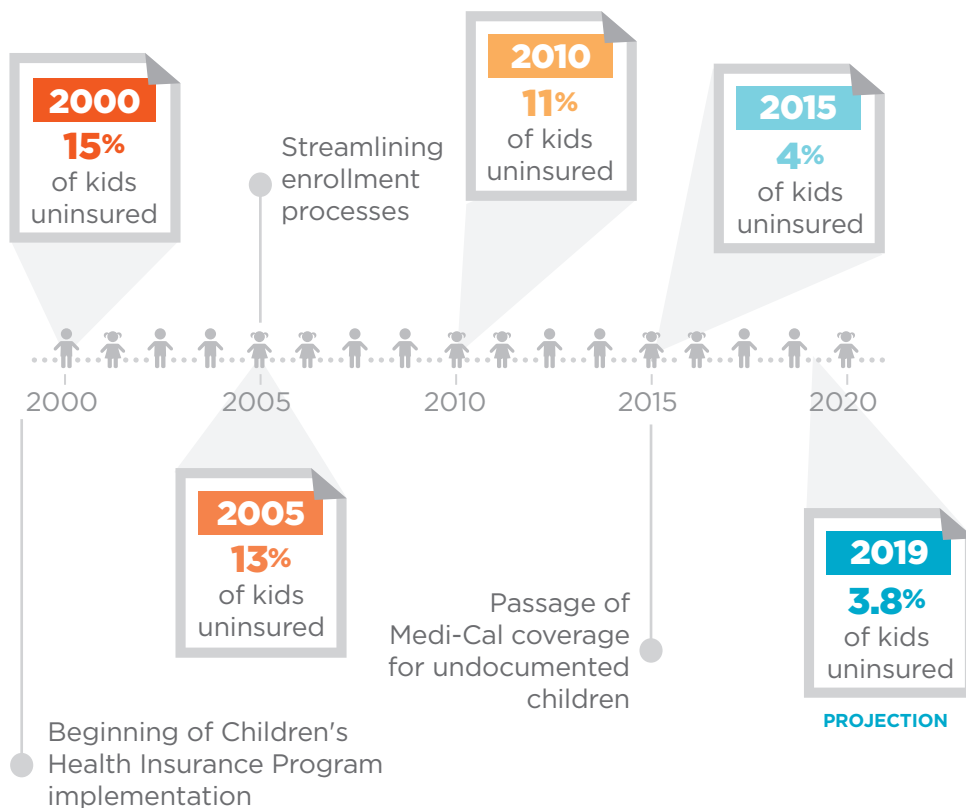
grade
A-



Health Insurance

Quality health insurance helps kids access timely, comprehensive health care, and supports their overall well-being.

Making steady progress to cover more California children¹



Data Highlights



Between 2013 and 2014, an estimated 176,000 kids gained health insurance coverage.² As of 2014, an estimated 95 percent of California's kids had health insurance,³ and beginning in 2015, 170,000 more kids will receive coverage due to California's decision to offer insurance to all income-eligible children, regardless of immigration status. Nevertheless, three out of four uninsured kids were eligible for public coverage but continued to go without insurance.⁴

Children with health insurance are more likely to receive necessary medical attention when health issues arise.⁵ They also have better access to preventive care, including regular exams, screening tests, medication and oral health care.^{6,7} This is especially true since, as a result of the Affordable Care Act, most preventive services don't have a copay.

Studies show that if the United States spent \$10 per person on preventive care, the country would save \$2.8 billion in the first year and more than \$16 billion over five years.⁸

Health insurance provides many health, social, and academic benefits for children.⁹ When kids get the care they need, it helps them succeed in all areas of their lives. In one study, California children showed a 60 percent improvement in school performance and concentration after enrolling in health insurance.¹⁰

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California should help all children enroll in affordable health insurance and ensure comprehensive and consistent benefits across public and private insurance carriers, so all families can access high-quality, affordable care.

Momentum



California is closer than ever to making sure all kids have health insurance coverage. Until now, undocumented immigrants were not eligible for comprehensive coverage under Medi-Cal, the state's Medicaid program. California recently joined a handful of other states in providing Medi-Cal for all income-eligible children regardless of immigration status. An estimated 170,000 undocumented children will gain health coverage as a result, yielding better, more equitable health outcomes.¹¹ Now California must work closely with key stakeholders for smooth and culturally competent implementation of the new coverage by summer 2016. This is especially important since a recent study shows that fear of deportation is one of the reasons citizen children with undocumented parents are 2.5 times more likely to be uninsured (10 percent) than those with citizen parents (4 percent).¹²



Spotlight

Removing barriers to health care

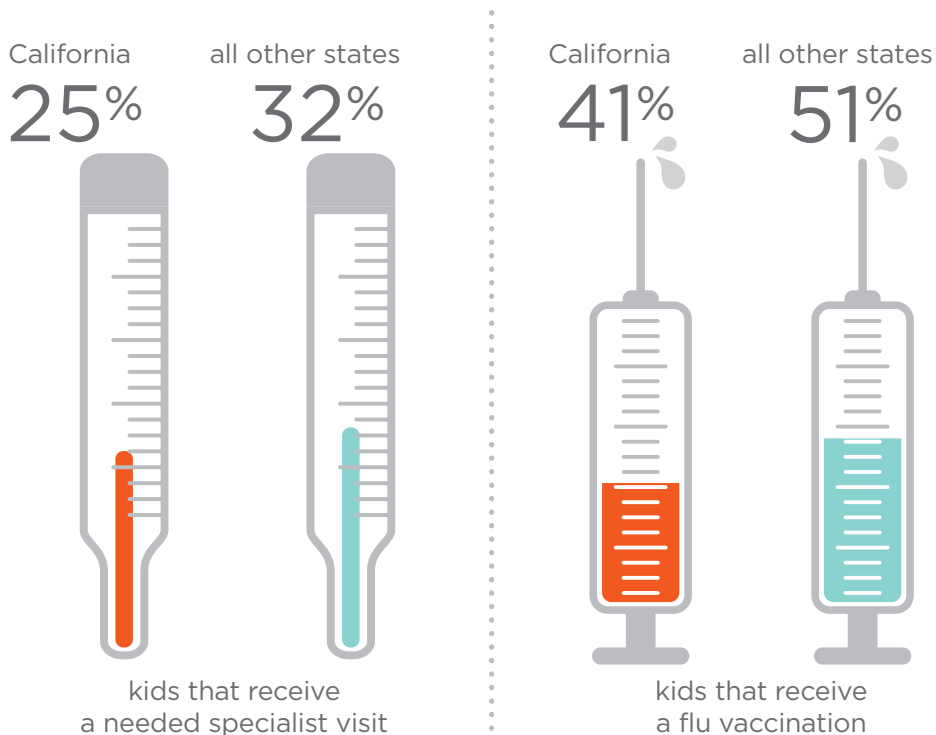
To learn about Visión y Compromiso (VyC) and their support of Promotores and Community Health Workers, visit visionycompromiso.org



Health Care Access

Accessible health care promotes kids' health and limits costs through prevention, early detection and disease management.

California's public Medicaid insurance provides worse health care access than other states' Medicaid programs¹



Data Highlights



Health insurance alone doesn't guarantee timely health care access.² Factors like language, transportation, provider shortages and cost can all create barriers to care.³ For example, ten percent of the population in Fresno County and 15 percent in Kern County live more than 15 miles from the closest emergency department.⁴

Barriers to accessing timely care are more pronounced for the 5 million children in Medi-Cal,⁵ the state's Medicaid program. They may face challenges finding Medi-Cal providers, getting timely appointments and finding providers close to their homes.⁶ California's ratio of full-time primary care Medi-Cal doctors is 42 per 100,000 enrollees, well below the recommended ratio of 70 doctors per 100,000 enrollees.⁷

Kids without health care access are more likely to suffer from preventable or manageable health problems like asthma.⁸ These problems cause numerous health and social consequences. Each year nearly 130,000 California children miss school or day care due to asthma alone, accounting for around 1.2 million school absences and jeopardizing school performance.⁹

One proven way to increase children's health care access is by providing services at school.¹⁰ The Mobile Health Center provided by the Fresno County Office of Education increased children's access to care by bringing services directly to school sites. In a single year, they served 672 children and referred 162 kids to a variety of services, from dental to mental health care.¹¹

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California must ensure children can access the care they need by collecting relevant access data and increasing funding for public insurance programs. This will support strong and robust provider networks that can provide timely services, including dental, mental, vision and hearing.

Momentum



Too many California kids aren't able to get the care they need, when they need it. Experts agree that the state needs to increase Medi-Cal provider rates and reduce administrative burden to boost the number of primary care doctors and dentists seeing Medi-Cal patients. The state has been working with the Medi-Cal Children's Health Advisory Panel to develop a tool to regularly monitor children's access to quality care in Medi-Cal. This is a promising step toward a better monitoring system that will help increase access to care and strengthen the Medi-Cal provider network.



Spotlight

Comparing health care plans

To see the Office of the Patient Advocate's ratings of health care plans, including details about access to timely care, visit prokid.info/oparhcp

grade
D+



Oral Health

Timely preventive dental services and treatment are essential to children's health.

Too few of California's most vulnerable young children are receiving oral health services¹



Data Highlights



Tooth decay is the most common chronic illness among children,² five times more common than asthma.³ Still, in half of California's 58 counties there is no pediatric dentist for children enrolled in Denti-Cal,⁴ the dental component of Medi-Cal. Our state has one of the nation's lowest Denti-Cal reimbursement rates,⁵ offering roughly one-third of the rate of private insurers.⁶ This is a major factor contributing to the shortage of Denti-Cal providers.⁷

Low-income kids suffer from inadequate access to dental care. While 55 percent of California children (over five million in total) are enrolled in Medi-Cal,⁸ fewer than half have received any dental service during the previous year.⁹ When children go without preventive oral health care, it can lead to costly problems. Each year, over 25,000 children's dental-related emergency room visits are likely costing the state millions,¹⁰ and over 500,000 dental-related school absences cost schools \$30 million.¹¹ Managing symptoms of tooth decay is ten times more expensive than providing preventive services.¹² Kids with dental problems also get lower grades, another cost to struggling children and families.¹³

A more comprehensive approach to improving access to oral health care has proven successful in Sonoma County. The county has opened new dental clinics, increased the number of pediatric dentists, and launched programs such as the Women, Infants and Children Supplemental Nutrition Dental Day Program, which has seen more than 10,000 patients who would otherwise go untreated.¹⁴

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California must give all kids access to timely dental care and should reinvest in preventive services to treat children where they are, including schools and early learning programs.

Momentum



California kids need better oral health care. According to a recent report, too few kids enrolled in Medi-Cal receive services, but little progress has been made to improve children's oral health care. The state has not yet restored funding for the California Children's Dental Disease Prevention Program, though it was effective in providing access to oral health care for students at low-income schools. California recently made a modest increase in Medi-Cal reimbursement rates to restore prior cuts, but rates are still too low. One bright spot is that California recently received a federal grant to improve oral health and increase utilization of oral health services for pregnant women and infants at high risk for oral disease. These funds will support a project to integrate oral health and primary care, improving access to both.



Spotlight

Medical-dental collaborations can increase preventive care

To see how Los Angeles County is increasing preventive services among children ages one to six, go to prokid.info/cnlacdp



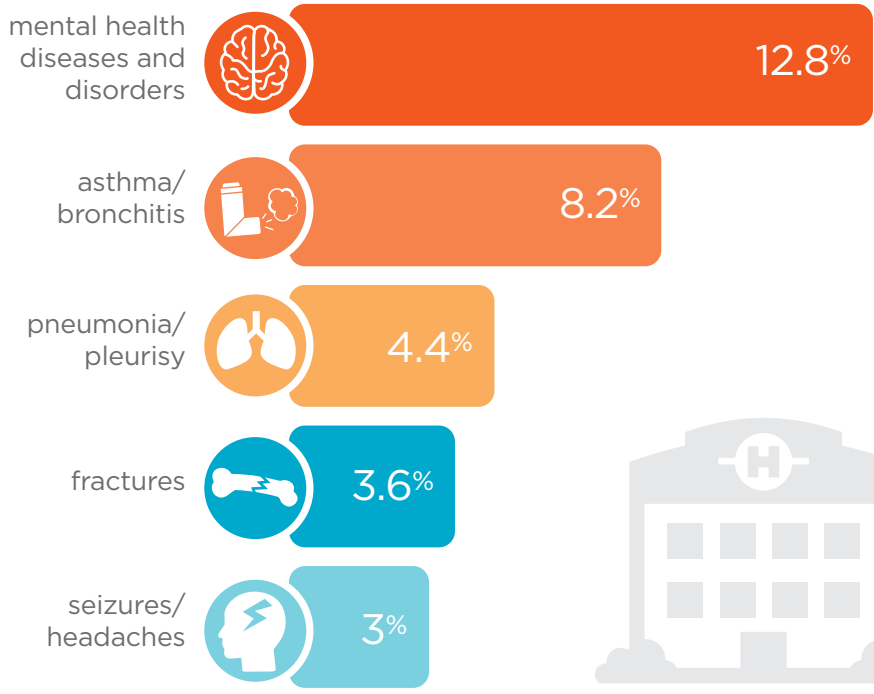
grade
D+



Mental & Behavioral Health

Kids' social and emotional health is crucial to their ability to cope with life's demands, and ultimately to thrive.

In one year, over 30,000 children entered the ER for mental health reasons, making it the most common reason for ER visits¹



percentage of hospitalizations

Data Highlights



Kids with untreated mental health problems often can't manage day-to-day life. An estimated seven percent of California's kids, around 690,000 children, struggle with severe mental health problems that interfere with daily activities and require treatment, proper care and support.² If they go without the treatment they need, children are more likely to be hospitalized,³ drop out of high school,⁴ become involved with the juvenile justice system,⁵ or commit suicide.⁶ In fact, suicide accounts for 0.5 per 100,000 deaths for children ages five to 14 and jumps to more than five per 100,000 for children ages 15-19.⁷

Quality mental health services are clearly crucial, yet only 31 percent of California adolescents⁸ and 40 percent of children under the age of six with emotional, developmental or behavioral problems get the support they need.⁹ Health insurance covers some mental health services, but access problems persist.¹⁰ Even when kids are able to access services, it often takes a long time before they actually get the care they need.¹¹ This is problematic because delays in getting care can make mental health concerns more serious and harder to treat.¹²

Providing mental health services at school increases kids' access to care and improves school performance. One study found that after a school-based health center began providing mental health services, there was a 13 percent increase in the number of kids advancing to the next grade.¹³ Many students seeking care from school-based health centers also reported being victimized or bullied in school, suggesting centers could be used to address kids' overall social and emotional needs.¹⁴

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



In order to give all children the care they need to thrive, California should increase access to mental health care in health care settings, and expand the reach of school-based mental health services.

Momentum



California's kids deserve the kind of services and care that lead to good mental health. But too many children aren't able to access critical and timely mental health services. Efforts to improve children's mental health were undermined when California stopped funding the Early Mental Health Initiative, a highly successful school-based mental health prevention and intervention program. Legislative proposals to restore funding for the Early Mental Health Initiative and create new school-based mental health programs have not yet passed, but a new budget allocation may help some young school children access mental health care. Additionally, due to a new law, kids who have autism disorder and are covered by Medi-Cal now have the opportunity to receive behavioral therapy, which will help improve educational outcomes and increase their overall well-being.



Spotlight

Providing mental health care in schools

To learn how San Diego Unified School District's Mental Health Resource Center is providing child and family-centered mental health care services, go to prokid.info/sdusdmhrc

grade

C



Health Homes

This family-centered model of health care delivery provides comprehensive, coordinated and accessible services.

Health homes coordinate health care services to improve health outcomes and reduce costs



with health homes



without health homes

Data Highlights



Health homes support positive health outcomes for kids by delivering coordinated, high-quality health care. A health home is a team-based model providing a comprehensive range of health care services in a personalized, coordinated manner, including medical, dental, mental health and support services.¹

By ensuring kids have comprehensive, ongoing care, this team-based delivery model leads to high-quality health services and positive health outcomes. At UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital, a Pediatric Medical Home Project that serves over 130 children² found that once children were enrolled in a health home, emergency room visits went down dramatically.³

Still, only 45 percent of children in California get coordinated care through a health home.⁴ The data are worse for California's vulnerable children - only 36 percent of kids with special health care needs⁵ and 25 percent of children in poverty are served by a health home.⁶

Studies find that inadequate coordination reduces the quality of care and leads to unnecessarily high costs, particularly for kids with the greatest needs. In some extreme cases, annual health care costs were nearly five times higher for patients who lacked coordinated care.⁷ One Texas study of kids with severe chronic illnesses found that those without a health home had nearly three times higher rates of intensive care admissions, and spent over three times more days in intensive care.⁸ If care for the highest-risk patients were coordinated, one study estimated that the U.S. could save more than \$240 billion a year, or nearly nine percent of all healthcare expenditures.⁹

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California should ensure that children have access to family-centered, comprehensive, coordinated and accessible care through a health home.

Momentum



California is developing a statewide Health Homes Program for enrollees in Medi-Cal, the state's Medicaid program, to serve individuals with multiple chronic conditions. Through the program, eligible children can receive comprehensive care that is coordinated, referrals to community and social support services and supports for themselves and their families.



Spotlight

Efforts to improve care coordination

To learn how the California Children's Services program serves children with special health care needs, visit prokid.info/dhcsccs

grade
D+



School-Based Health Services

On-site health care improves student health and promotes kids' academic success.

School-based health centers can make a big difference

Down!

- discipline referrals
- failing classes
- emergency room visits

UP!

- attendance
- A+ grades
- preventive care
- grade completion/advancement

Data Highlights



Children with access to school-based health centers are more likely to receive physical, dental and mental health services, as well as immunizations and treatment for chronic conditions like asthma.¹ This can make a big difference for kids, especially those who might have trouble accessing health care elsewhere. One study found that low-income adolescents using school-based health centers were over one and a half times more likely to have a preventive health care visit and 50 percent less likely to go to the emergency room.² Given the benefits of preventive care, one study found school-based health centers can decrease hospitalization costs by as much as 84 percent for patients with asthma.³

Providing students with school-based health services has other crucial benefits. One study found that students who received mental health services at school showed a 31 percent decrease in course failure, a 32 percent decrease in absences and a 95 percent decrease in discipline referrals.⁴ Another study found that students who used school-based health services had an average grade increase from C+ to B-.⁵ School-based health care recipients are also more likely to advance to the next grade (90 percent compared to 83 percent of non-recipients), and more likely to feel confident in reaching their goals, succeeding in school and going to college.⁶

Despite the many obvious benefits, only 29 percent of California school districts have school nurses on staff to provide care,⁷ and only two percent of California schools have a full school-based health center.⁸

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California should increase capacity of school-based health centers so that more children are able to access physical, mental, vision and dental health services at schools, where kids spend the majority of their time. This will improve children's well-being, increase their access to preventive care and lighten the load for busy families.

Momentum



California children lag behind kids in other states when it comes to accessing health care services at school. Programs in counties like Alameda and Los Angeles are great examples of the ways schools can meet the health care needs of their students. Unfortunately, these efforts aren't yet being scaled statewide. Notably, California has failed to fund the Early Mental Health Initiative and the California Children's Dental Disease Prevention Program, two proven in-school programs. A federal policy change and new state legislation allow school districts to get Medicaid reimbursements for health services provided to eligible students. This is an early step in the right direction, but ensuring effective implementation is critical. Many schools have reduced their available health care services, so effectively implementing this policy will give districts an improved revenue source, while promoting the health and well-being of California students, especially in low-income districts.



Spotlight

Making health and education equity a reality

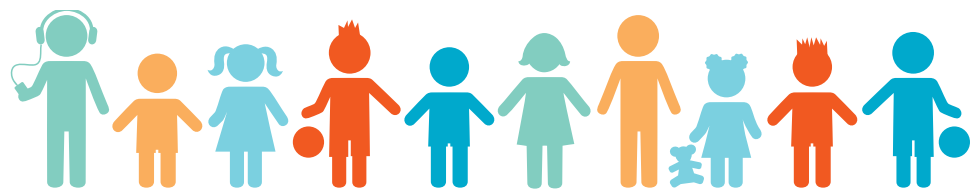
To learn more about efforts by the Center for Healthy Schools and Communities in Alameda County, visit prokid.info/hs-c



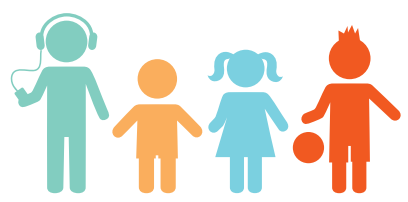
Obesity Prevention & Nutrition

Children who lack access to nutritious food or are overweight are more likely to develop serious and costly health conditions.

The National School Lunch program is not reaching every California student who needs it¹



almost **3.5 million** kids are eligible for free and reduced priced meals



but **1.1 million** kids are not receiving free and reduced price meals



Data Highlights



Thirty percent of children in California are overweight or obese,² which drastically increases their risk of developing fatal diseases as adults, including diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, stroke and cancer.³

Eating well and exercising helps children maintain a healthy weight. But there are significant barriers to healthy food and exercise, especially for kids living in poverty. Nearly one in four Californian kids has limited or inconsistent food access,⁴ and three out of four low-income families say cost is a significant barrier to eating healthy meals.⁵ These families are more likely to live farther away from supermarkets and closer to convenience stores and fast-food restaurants,⁶ and are also less likely to live in walkable neighborhoods or near safe recreational areas in which to exercise.⁷ These and other barriers make low-income children over twice as likely to be obese than their more affluent peers.⁸

Programs designed to increase the availability of healthy food in schools and communities such as CalFresh and Free and Reduced Price Meals are important to kids and families struggling with food access. The Shaping Healthy Choices Program developed at the University of California, Davis uses the Common Core curriculum to teach children about nutrition and encourage gardening, healthy cooking and exercise in elementary schools. In just one year, students in this program ate up to 40 percent more vegetables and the percentage of overweight and obese children dropped from 56 to 38 percent.⁹

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California should take a comprehensive approach to childhood obesity by ensuring children have adequate time to exercise, offering nutrition education in schools and supporting access to healthy choices in and out of school.

Momentum



Today, fewer California children are obese in part due to small investments in physical education and school nutrition. California has taken steps to help give children access to drinking water and healthier food at school. But much more must be done, including reducing the consumption of sugary beverages and increasing access to nutritious meals and snacks during the summer and in after school programs.



Spotlight

Using Common Core to teach nutrition education

To learn how to bring the Shaping Healthy Choices Program to your community, visit prokid.info/shcps




Childhood Trauma & Resilience

Adverse childhood experiences like abuse and neglect can have serious, long-term physical and social consequences.

Traumatic events lead to a lifetime of health consequences¹

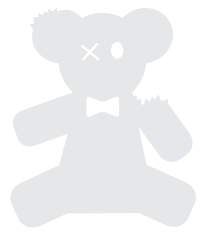

A person with 4 or more Adverse Childhood Experiences is:

Almost **2½X**
more likely to suffer from
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease



More than **4X**
as likely to be diagnosed with
Alzheimer's Disease or Dementia

More than **5X**
as likely to suffer from
Depression



Data Highlights



Research demonstrates the long-lasting negative impact trauma has on children's health, learning and emotional well-being.^{2,3} Adding up Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) is one way to categorize and measure childhood trauma. It's estimated that 18 percent of California children – over one and a half million – have had at least two Adverse Childhood Experiences in their lives.⁴

Trauma undermines long-term health. For example, children with four or more Adverse Childhood Experiences are over twice as likely to suffer from heart disease and almost twice as likely to have diabetes as those who have not experienced traumatic events.⁵

Trauma can also interfere with memory development and emotional regulation, and often causes children trouble at school.⁶ One study showed that kids with three or more adverse childhood experiences were three times more likely to fail academically, five times more likely to be chronically absent and six times more likely to have behavioral problems like disruptive or violent outbursts.⁷

Some health centers and educational organizations have taken the lead on addressing trauma and increasing children's resilience. The Children's Clinic in Long Beach and the Center for Youth Wellness in San Francisco provide kids and families with trauma-focused services like cognitive behavioral therapy, Child Parent Psychotherapy and Cue-Centered Therapy.⁸ The University of California, San Francisco and San Francisco Unified School District are collaborating to offer trauma-informed therapy in local schools.⁹ Providing students with emotional support and teaching them how to manage their emotions has made a huge difference in San Francisco schools, including an 89 percent drop in suspension rates in one elementary school¹⁰ as well as a reported 42 percent decline in violent student incidents.¹¹

Pro-Kid® Policy Agenda



California should promote policies and programs that build on child, caregiver, and community strengths to support trauma prevention, healing and resilience, particularly for traditionally underserved populations.

Momentum



Work is underway on several fronts to reduce kids' exposure to trauma and increase individual, family and community resilience. Several initiatives, including the Adverse Childhood Experiences Policy Working Group, the California Essentials for Childhood Initiative, and the Defending Childhood Initiative are working on statewide policy solutions across early childhood, health, education, child welfare, juvenile justice and other systems serving California kids and families.



Spotlight

Overcoming trauma

To learn how the Children's Clinic in Long Beach is helping children build resilience, go to thechildrensclinic.org

grade

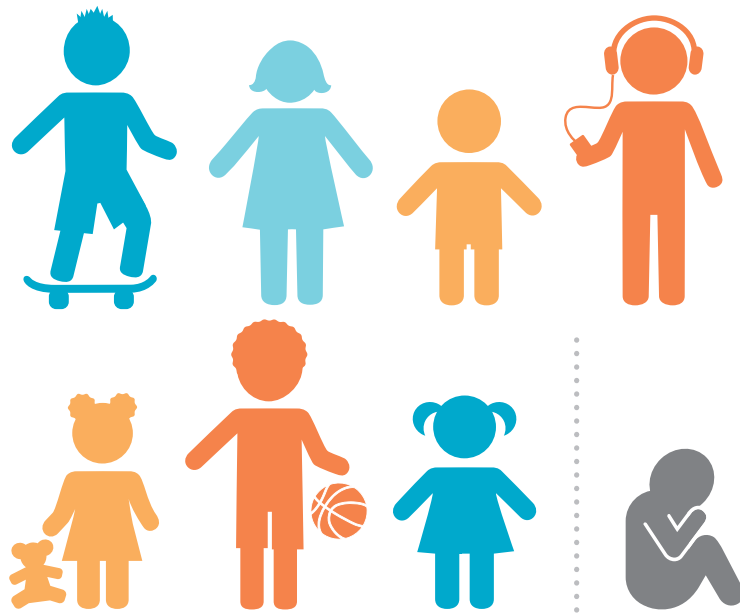
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Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention

These services protect children and youth by preventing maltreatment or intervening quickly to help kids heal.

Too many children are victims of maltreatment¹



almost

1 in 8 U.S. kids will be victims of maltreatment by age 18

Data Highlights



In just one year, nearly 80,000 California children are confirmed victims of child abuse and neglect.² Among those, ten percent will experience further maltreatment within a year.³

The consequences of abuse and neglect are severe.⁴ By age 21, eight in ten young adults who were abused as kids experience depression, anxiety, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress or other mental health challenges.⁵

The recurrence of child abuse and neglect can be reduced by interventions that improve family functioning. In Los Angeles County, First 5 LA invested nearly \$20 million to help provide Parent-Child Interaction Therapy for families with children who have been diagnosed with behavioral issues often associated with past maltreatment. This and other programs are shown to improve relationships by encouraging positive interactions and giving parents skills to help kids cope with stress and past trauma.⁶

Home visiting programs, providing ongoing support to new and expectant parents and through the first years of life, are also proven to reduce rates of abuse and neglect. The Nurse-Family Partnership home visiting program reduced child maltreatment among children of low-income, single mothers by nearly half,⁷ leading to happier, healthier kids and better outcomes for families.

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California should support a prevention program for children at risk of maltreatment, to promote prevention, early identification and intervention and at-home services. The program would support families and keep children safe from maltreatment, and when possible work to keep children and families together.

Momentum



Groundbreaking research is paving the way to greater awareness of childhood trauma, highlighting the need for California to develop a more robust child abuse and neglect prevention system, and demonstrating the importance of investing in such prevention systems. Studies are shedding new light on how common abuse and neglect are among California kids. The Children's Data Network, linking child welfare systems data with other population data, can help identify the true frequency of maltreatment to illustrate the pervasiveness of the problem. A new law that took effect in 2015 provides parenting foster youth with added supports they need to be effective parents to help break the cycle of abuse and neglect. Still far too many of our state's foster youth are suffering the effects of abuse and neglect, without the support they need to heal and thrive. California must do more for these vulnerable kids.



Spotlight

Improving families' coping strategies

To learn more about how Parent-Child Interaction Therapy in Los Angeles County helps families with kids with a history of maltreatment, visit prokid.info/f5lapcit

grade

C



Placement Stability

Placement stability helps ensure foster youth are raised in a caring family with the supports and services they need to heal.

Frequent moves are traumatic and deny foster youth the opportunity to heal¹



after being in care for 2 or more years

Data Highlights



Foster youth need loving, stable families to help them heal from their histories of trauma. Unfortunately, two out of three California foster children in care for 24 months or more experience three or more placements.² Frequent moves can result in a sense of loss, distrust and a fear of forming healthy bonds, brain changes and, ultimately, placement in a group home.³ Foster youth generally do better when they're raised in families rather than group homes,⁴ but nearly 35 percent of foster youth ages 16-17 don't live in family-like settings.⁵ This is a direct result of a system that does too little to provide the necessary training, support and services to foster parents—especially relatives.

Almost 20,000 foster children, more than one-third of all California foster children, are in kinship care,⁶ meaning that they are raised by relatives. These children are two times more likely to report positive emotional health than their peers in the child welfare system.⁷ Yet relatives receive the least financial support, supervision and services, making it difficult to meet the needs of their foster kids.⁸

Because too little support is provided to caregivers, especially relatives, it's difficult to recruit and maintain enough quality foster homes for all the children in the state's care. This can perpetuate a traumatizing cycle of instability for California foster children.

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California must prioritize policies promoting kids' placement stability, reduce reliance on group care and ensure foster children receive all the services they need to thrive. All caregivers should get training, support and services they need to be successful parents to children who have experienced abuse or neglect.

Momentum



California's Continuum of Care Reform is an ongoing effort, started in 2011, to increase placement stability for foster youth by ensuring support and services are available in home-based settings. In addition, the Approved Relative Caregiver Funding Program is landmark legislation signed into law by Governor Brown in June 2014 to provide relatives caring for foster youth access to much-needed additional financial support. Also, the legal rights of foster youth are now more protected thanks to \$11 million in the 2015-16 state budget, which will reduce caseloads so that lawyers can provide more effective legal representation and potentially reduce the length of court involvement for youth and families.



Spotlight

Supporting relative caregivers

To learn more about the Approved Relative Caregiver Funding Program go to stepupforkin.org/arc

grade

C



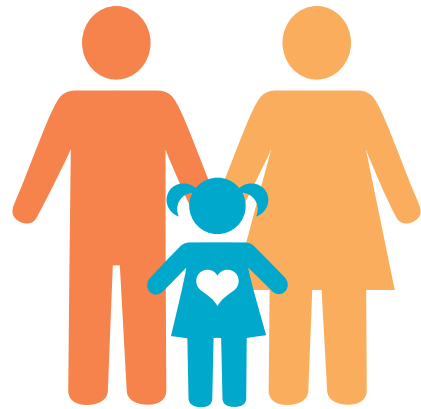
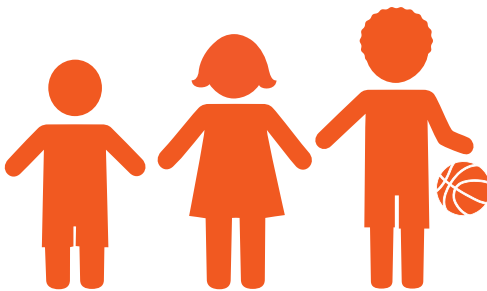
Permanent Connections

Foster youth with lifelong connections to caring adults get the support and guidance they need to grow up happy and healthy.

Too few children in foster care find a permanent home¹

after being in care for
2 or more years, only

1 out of 4 foster kids finds a
permanent home



within the subsequent 12 month period

Data Highlights



Children can find a permanent home formally, through reunification with parents, legal guardianship or adoption, or informally, through a permanent relationship. Foster youth and their caregivers need comprehensive services such as child care, social support, and ongoing therapeutic assistance to make permanency possible and successful for foster children.² Without this support, one in four adoptions ends before it's finalized,³ and one in ten children returns to foster care.⁴

In California, 20,000 children enter the foster care system each year,⁵ and 2,800 to 3,500 foster youth exit the system at age 18 or older. These youth are often thrust into adulthood without a lifelong connection to a caring adult they can turn to for guidance or support.

The lack of strong, lasting adult relationships puts foster youth at greater risk for lifelong negative outcomes, such as unemployment, homelessness and incarceration.⁶ Foster kids need additional support to make a successful transition to adulthood.

A new federal law focuses needed attention on ensuring youth exit foster care with a lifelong connection to a caring adult. The law is also improving data collection regarding children who re-enter foster care after an adoption or guardianship. These are steps in the right direction, but California must do more to promote the well-being of these vulnerable kids.

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California should support policies encouraging permanency and give ongoing services to help families succeed after reunification, adoption or placement in legal guardianship. The state should develop policies for tracking the outcomes of kids adopted or placed with guardians to ensure families are succeeding and children are thriving.

Momentum



Thanks to recent federal and state momentum, efforts are underway to increase the number of youth who leave foster care with a permanent adult connection and to provide needed supports to help families succeed after adoption, reunification or guardianship. California is in the process of implementing the Resource Family Approval Program, a new unified family-friendly and child-centered process for approving families to care for foster children and reducing wait times for permanency.⁷



Spotlight

Supporting permanency

To learn how the Kinship Center provides support to children and families to achieve and sustain permanency, visit kinshipcenter.org

grade

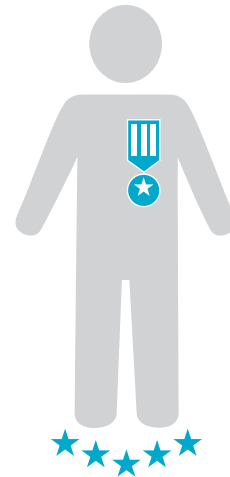
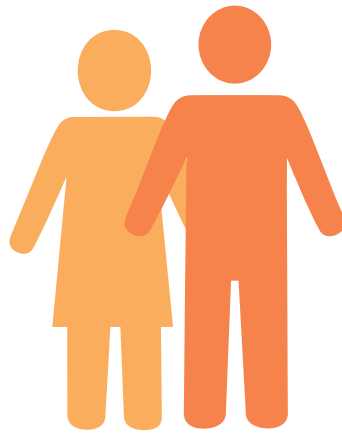
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Foster Youth Health

Foster youth need comprehensive and timely health care that addresses trauma and helps reduce health disparities.

Many former foster youth suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder¹



former
foster youth
are

2X more likely to suffer from PTSD than combat veterans

Data Highlights



Foster youth have experienced abuse, neglect and trauma, which can cause serious, ongoing physical and mental health difficulties. Foster youth are up to three times more likely than their peers to experience developmental challenges, such as physical disability, difficulty remembering or difficulty with personal care,² and up to six times more likely to struggle with serious mental or behavioral health issues.³ More than 40 percent of 17-year-old California foster youth report feeling so low that they've thought about suicide.⁴

In spite of their unique health needs, foster youth often face barriers to accessing health care services. Currently, only 65 percent of California foster youth with serious emotional challenges receive the mental health services they need.⁵ When they do receive services, they are frequently drug-based; roughly one in six foster youth are treated with psychotropic drugs.⁶ While medication can be an effective component of a treatment plan, it should not be used in lieu of therapeutic mental health services.

Trauma's harmful effects on health and well-being continue into adulthood. Fortunately, as of 2014, youth exiting foster care at 18 or older qualify for free health care until age 26.

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California should ensure that foster youth are provided with comprehensive health care, including the mental and behavioral health services they need to heal from trauma. The state should also make sure foster youth transitioning to adulthood are receiving the continuous health coverage until age 26 that they're entitled to by law.

Momentum



More former foster youth have access to health care thanks to state efforts, but more work is needed to ensure youth receive timely, coordinated services while in foster care. A new global data sharing agreement between the California Department of Social Services and the Department of Health Care Services allows the agencies to exchange information to identify trends and better meet foster youth's unique health needs. In 2015, legislation was signed that will provide more oversight to ensure medications are prescribed appropriately and in conjunction with other mental health supports.



Spotlight

Connecting former foster youth to health care

To learn more about Coveredtil26 visit coveredtil26.org



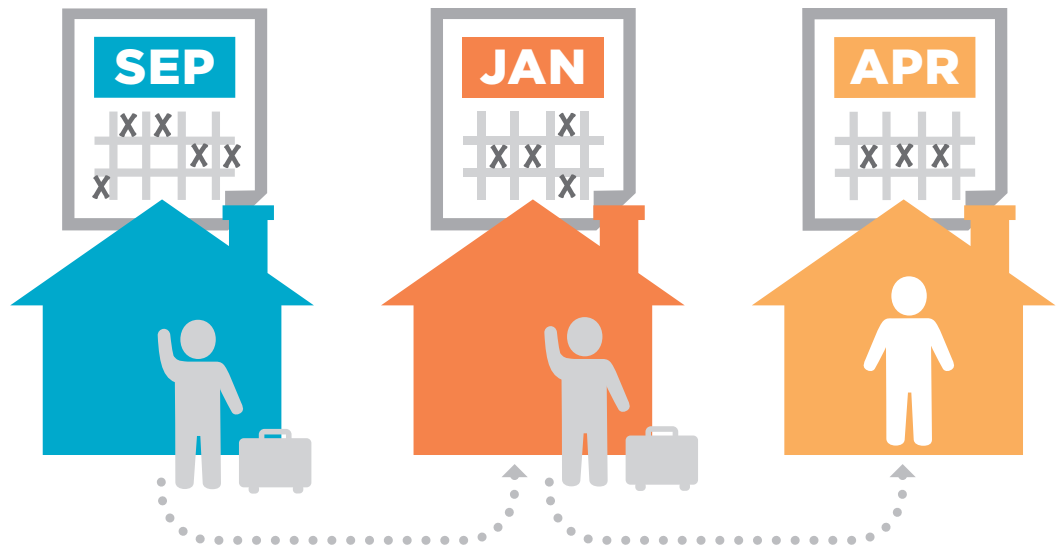
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Foster Youth Education

Services and supports help foster youth address unique barriers and achieve success in school.

Too many moves mean foster youth miss too much school¹



1 in 3 foster youth miss at least a month of school a year

Data Highlights



Many foster youth have high educational aspirations - 84 percent of 17-year old foster youth want to earn a college degree or higher.² But instability and trauma interfere with children's learning, leading to early and persistent achievement gaps.³ For example, 75 percent of foster youth read below grade-level in third grade,⁴ a critical benchmark for future academic success, compared to 55 percent of all students.⁵ These trends continue through high school and beyond: only 45 percent of California foster youth finish high school on time, compared to 79 percent of all California kids.⁶ Foster youth are also less likely to attend college than their peers and more likely to drop out,⁷ with only two to nine percent of the state's foster youth earning a bachelor's degree.⁸

Foster youth move frequently. Almost two-thirds change schools seven times or more while in care,⁹ a trend associated with lower graduation rates.¹⁰

Behaviors stemming from untreated trauma histories are linked to high rates of suspensions and expulsions.¹¹ Nationally, 67 percent of foster youth have been suspended at least once,¹² and students who are suspended are five times more likely to drop out of school.¹³

The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) targets these issues by granting districts extra funding to address this achievement gap.¹⁴ Despite the tremendous promise offered by the new school finance law, early implementation of the LCFF hasn't yet resulted in a significant improvement in targeted supports and services for foster youth.¹⁵

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California should provide foster youth with the targeted supports and services they need to succeed in school and prepare for college and career. The state should ensure that the new school finance system benefits foster youth as intended.

Momentum



The state has taken critical first steps to reducing barriers to foster youth's educational success. Under the new school finance law, districts must report on foster youth's educational outcomes and actively work to improve them. To help achieve this, the California Department of Education and the California Department of Social Services have recently begun sharing data on foster youth. To increase college graduation rates among current and former foster youth, a recent state law expands the Extended Opportunities Programs and Services program. The program provides enrollment assistance, educational planning, tutoring and educational services and limited financial assistance, creating more support for foster youth students on college campuses. Still, too few California foster youth are getting the education they need to succeed in life.



Spotlight

Foster youth have specific educational needs

Learn more about the work of the California Foster Youth Education Task Force at cfyETF.org

grade

D



Juvenile Justice

Juvenile justice agencies that supervise youth with high rates of trauma should rehabilitate, not just punish, these vulnerable kids.

Given the same type of offense, youth of color are treated less fairly¹

youth of color are more than

2X

as likely to be incarcerated for non-violent offenses as white youth



Data Highlights



The juvenile justice system is biased against historically disadvantaged groups like children of color and foster youth.² It's documented that kids of color are incarcerated at rates well above those of white peers charged with similar offenses.³ One particularly vulnerable group known as "crossover youth," have a history involving both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.⁴ These youth are more than two times as likely to be incarcerated for low-level offenses than their justice-involved peers who are not involved in the child welfare system. For instance, with their first offense, children in the child welfare system are more likely to be placed in restrictive settings, like group homes, than other youth.⁵

The vast majority, between 75 and 93 percent, of all youth entering the justice system are estimated to have experienced previous trauma.⁶ Research has shown that girls in the justice system are 200 to 300 times more likely to have experienced sexual or physical abuse in the past than girls who haven't been in the system.⁷

Trauma affects kids' health and can interfere with memory development and emotional regulation,^{8,9} which means children who have experienced trauma are more likely to struggle in school and have behavioral problems such as disruptive or violent outbursts.¹⁰

Incarceration doesn't address kids' underlying trauma. It's also costly and can be ineffective in deterring future crime;¹¹ California prisons cost six times as much as high school,¹² and research shows that incarceration may put kids at increased risk for future criminal activity.¹³ Even worse, it's been shown that incarcerated youth are often victimized, resulting in further trauma.¹⁴

Pro-Kid[®] Policy Agenda



California should increase its oversight of juvenile justice agencies and incentivize evidence-driven

investments. Trauma-responsive justice systems grounded in adolescent development yield better outcomes for youth, reduce racial inequities and increase public safety better than punishment alone.

Momentum



While California's juvenile justice system is intended to rehabilitate youth, too often youth are only punished and retraumatized. While the state has some bright spots, like the Positive Youth Justice Initiative, these efforts haven't been scaled to provide a systematic approach to youth rehabilitation. Still, California has made some legislative progress. Youth benefited from a 2014 law passed by California voters which reclassified certain low-level, nonviolent offenses to misdemeanors and reduced their sentences. The savings from reduced incarceration costs will be invested into drug and mental health treatment, programs for at-risk students and victim services. Additionally, a 2015 state law will raise California's standard for the quality of juvenile legal representation by ensuring all delinquency attorneys meet certain training or experience requirements. This will ensure that when these vulnerable youth appear in court, they have strong voices advocating for their fair treatment.



Spotlight

Promote positive youth development

To learn how Vallejo City Unified is improving the lives of crossover youth go to: prokid.info/vcusdj

Endnotes

California's Children

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