



Final Report- Graphic Summary

Santa Cruz County

Early Care, Education, and After-School Care Strategic Plan – 2023

Prepared for

Santa Cruz County Childhood Advisory Council,
Santa Cruz County Office of Education

Prepared by

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SANTA CRUZ
COUNTY OFFICE OF
EDUCATION
DR. FARIS SABBABH • SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

FOCUS AREA 1: ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

GOAL 1

Families of all socioeconomic levels have access to integrated and equitable care, education, and after-school opportunities for children, from birth up to age 13.

| COMMUNITY VALUE | OBJECTIVE | ACTION STRATEGIES | LEADS AND PARTNERS |
|---|---|---|---|
| EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE EARLY CARE, EDUCATION, AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS | 1a. Advance a local policy to surmount state-imposed regulatory barriers to county's achievement of desired outcomes for early care, education, and after-school programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement individualized child care subsidy pilot plans based on the new State Assembly Bill 1352 - Child Care and Development Services: individualized county child care subsidy plans. • Update the countywide subsidy funding matrix of all state and federal programs. • Conduct Social Media Campaign on new income requirements for subsidized care. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childhood Advisory Council • Community Partners • Early Care, Education, and After-School Providers • Santa Cruz County Office of Education • Monterey County • San Benito County • Santa Clara County • San Mateo County |
| | 1b. Increase early care, education, and after-school facilities, including license-exempt care and family child care homes that provide safe, nurturing, and high-quality learning environments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue the expansion of diverse facility funding support for local and state programs, including strategies for partnering with businesses to support facilities' needs. • Advocate for facility funding, including policies imposing developer fees on new developments, parcel taxes on existing developments, new cannabis taxes, and other funding mechanisms. • Create a Child Care Financing Plan that leverages a range of possible funding sources and mechanisms for new and expanded licensed child care facilities and programs. • Solicit private investments such as employer-funded child care. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childhood Advisory Council • Child Development Resource Center • First 5 Santa Cruz County • Community Partners including County and Cities • Early Care, Education, and After-School Providers • Local Partners including: developers, community banks, volunteers, and foundations • County and cities decision-makers and elected officials • Non-traditional partners to support facility locations: senior centers, private schools, churches, community centers • School Districts • Thrive by Five Advisory Council |
| | 1c. Develop a centralized system to improve coordination, communication, and linkages that will provide a continuum of early care, education, and after-school support for all families. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a system of single point of entry care service model/framework so that families can access current child care, early- and after-school care availability, and other resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bay Area Coordinators Association • Childhood Advisory Council • Child Care Providers • Child Development Resource Center • Santa Cruz County Human Services Department • Santa Cruz County Office of Education • Thrive by Five Advisory Council |
| | 1d. Develop a new Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) Mixed Delivery Local Plan, which supports a range of options for children and their families considering Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and Kindergarten (K). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a UPK Mixed Delivery working group to develop a countywide plan on the issues and utilize recently awarded grant funds. • The UPK local plan will align with the ELO-P and P&I grants approved by CDE for Santa Cruz County Office of Education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childhood Advisory Council • County Office of Education • Child Care Providers • Child Development Resource Center • Santa Cruz County Human Services Department • Thrive by Five Advisory Council |

FOCUS AREA 1: ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY - INDICATORS OF SUCCESS



“Children must be taught how to think, not what to think.”

- Margaret Mead



AFFORDABILITY – COST OF CARE

- Decrease the percentage of income families dedicate to early care, education, and after-school programs, aiming to make it 10% or less of total family household income.

AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

- Decrease the number of children in the County experiencing a shortage of space available by 10%.
- Increase the number of total spaces in early and after-school care centers including family-based programs.

UTILIZATION

- Increase awareness of who qualifies for subsidized care in the County.
- Increase the number of children enrolled in subsidized care in the County by 10% to 20% over the next five years.
- Increase in 4-year-olds participating in Transitional Kindergarten by 25% over the next five years.

FOCUS AREA 2: QUALITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING - IMPLEMENTATION

GOAL 2

Every child thrives socially, emotionally, and academically because they receive quality early care, education, and after-school programs.

| COMMUNITY VALUE | OBJECTIVE | ACTION STRATEGIES | LEADS AND PARTNERS |
|--|---|---|---|
| EVERY CHILD IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY IS THRIVING AND FEELS INCLUDED, SEEN, AND VALUED FOR WHO THEY ARE | 2a. Increase the number of child care providers engaged in quality improvement systems. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Childhood Advisory Council will provide quality professional development opportunities, extend professional development services to non-subsidized providers, and explore the development of a countywide training calendar. Increase participation in Quality Counts Santa Cruz County (the local Quality Counts California program) by 25%. Develop a public awareness campaign for parents on the importance of quality standards. Continue to participate in countywide efforts in developing trauma-informed organizations, services, and policies. Partner with early care, education, and after-school programs' stakeholders to identify the diverse federal, state, and local evidence-based tools that measure quality programs to be implemented as a measurement of quality in our community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabrillo College Early Childhood Education Program Childhood Advisory Council Child Development Resource Center Early Care, Education, and After-School Partners Family Child Care Providers First 5 Santa Cruz County Santa Cruz County Mental Health, and Human Services Departments Santa Cruz County Office of Education Santa Cruz County Quality Counts Consortium Trauma-Informed System - Santa Cruz County Thrive by 5 |
| | 2b. Increase School readiness countywide. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and develop strategies to ensure continuity of learning as children transition from early care to TK through 12th grade. Partner with school districts to implement a Universal Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Tool. Connect all early care and education providers to the TK-12 system to increase communication and coordination. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childhood Advisory Council Early Care, Education, and After-School Partners First 5 Santa Cruz County Santa Cruz County Office of Education and School Districts Santa Cruz County Quality Counts Consortium |
| | 2c. Promote equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging within all programs and activities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness regarding equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging amongst providers, families, policymakers, and elected officials. Work with other Community Partners and efforts to expand access to affordable care, regardless of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, religion, and language spoken. Host Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion workshops and trainings for child care providers and staff. Conduct deep data analysis on racial and economic equity in our system during Needs Assessment preparation and each update of the Strategic Plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CORE Investments and CORE Institute Childhood Advisory Council Early Care, Education, and After-School Partners First 5 Santa Cruz County Santa Cruz County Office of Education and School Districts Santa Cruz County Quality Counts Consortium County of Santa Cruz and local city governments |

FOCUS AREA 2: QUALITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING - INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

QUALITY

- Increase the number of providers participating in quality improvement frameworks including, but not limited to, Quality Counts Santa Cruz County and QCC Workforce Pathway Grant Program.
- Increase quality of early care and education sites participating in Quality Counts.
- Improve the well-being of incoming TK/K children through the assessment of basic health indicators and social-emotional indicators to be monitored and assessed through the school district Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAP) process.
- Increase the number of children ready for TK/K across all school districts.

EVERY CHILD IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY IS THRIVING, BELONGS AND FEELS INCLUDED, SEEN, AND VALUED FOR WHO THEY ARE

- Reduce the disparities between income and opportunities for child care providers, and staff, particularly women of color.
- Increase Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging training for Early Care and Learning Education workforce.

"As our cities and county governments begin to make child well-being a high priority in their budget processes, utilizing the Childhood Advisory Council's Master Plan for Early Care and Education as a compass, and bringing early educators into the conversation, would lay the groundwork for giving every child a stronger start in school. It's not too late."

- Michael C. Watkins – Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools



FOCUS AREA 3: SUSTAINABILITY AND WORKFORCE - IMPLEMENTATION

GOAL 3

The child care workforce and providers are valued, supported, and encouraged to expand and seek additional education and resources.

| COMMUNITY VALUE | OBJECTIVE | ACTION STRATEGIES | LEADS AND PARTNERS |
|---|--|---|--|
| SANTA CRUZ COUNTY VALUES CHILDREN'S EARLY DEVELOPMENT AS FUNDAMENTAL TO OUR SHARED PROSPERITY | 3a. Support child care providers with business training, education, workshops, and strategies to manage and access resources to create stable business operations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate more child care programs' revenue resources through strategies such as ballot measures, parcel taxes, local children's funds, developer fees and support, local foundation funding, and government set-a-sides. Provide technical assistance to providers in accessing local and state grants. Hold training workshops on Business Best Practices to help increase provider financial stability. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childhood Advisory Council Central Coast Early Childhood Policy Advocacy Network Early Care, Education, and After-School Partners Local, state, and federal decision-makers Business Partners Funders – Government, Foundations, and Corporations |
| | 3b. Increase the number of early care, education, and after-school program professionals and the average education levels. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with school districts to include early care, education, and after-school services within their local control accountability plans. Encourage retired ECE teachers to participate in an ECE Substitute Teacher Pool to support existing teachers with needed time off, including time for vacations, trainings, etc. Work with school districts, community colleges, and vocational training programs to develop and/or increase early care, education, and after-school Career Pathway Programs. Participate and engage in appropriate workforce development efforts to address the shortage of early care, education, and after-school program professionals. Encourage Small Family Child Care Home (FCCH) providers to expand, when possible to become Large FCCHs. Support emerging family providers with licensing permit and workforce registry. Identify Family, Friends, and Neighbor providers who can become licensed providers when possible. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childhood Advisory Council Child Development Resource Center First 5 Santa Cruz Central Coast Early Childhood Policy Advocacy Network Santa Cruz County School Districts Cabrillo College Human Services Department Workforce Development Board Retired ECE teachers and teacher aides |
| | 3c. Increase the number of early care, education, and after-school professional providers earning a living wage. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advance a 'Worthy Wage' Campaign to advocate for higher wages in the industry. Prepare a "Santa Cruz County Workforce Survey and Study." Develop a method to quantify wage disparities within the early care, education, and after-school labor market. Participate in Statewide advocacy efforts to increase reimbursement rates to be closer to the actual true cost of care. Prepare a Santa Cruz County "True Cost of Care Study." | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Partners Central Coast Early Childhood Policy Advocacy Network Childhood Advisory Council Local and State elected officials State and local advocacy organizations Human Services Department and Workforce Development Workforce Investment Board Thrive by 5 |

FOCUS AREA 3: SUSTAINABILITY AND WORKFORCE - INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

INCREASED SUSTAINABILITY AND WORKFORCE

- **Increase the average wages** for early care, education, and after-school professionals.
- **Develop an ECE Substitute Teacher Pool** to support existing teachers.
- **Increase the number** of early care, education, and after-school professionals in the field.
- Complete a comprehensive countywide **Workforce Survey and Study by 2024**, including use of focus groups.
- **Increase the retention** of early care, education, and after-school professionals.
- **Increase the number** of child care professionals participating in the **Workforce Pathway Grant program and Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program (IEEEP)** trainings.



"The COE's trainings that I've attended this year are so useful in my every day work with children. The information is really helping me feel better prepared for classroom challenges that have been hard for me to manage. Since these trainings, I've been able to share the tools and information with families, so we can work together to help their children learn and feel more successful in school."

- Preschool Teacher



"The purpose of education is to replace an empty mind with an open one."

- Malcolm Forbes

FOCUS AREA 4: CHILD CARE COLLABORATIONS - IMPLEMENTATIONS

GOAL 4

There will be community and political commitment to sustained investment in high-quality, accessible, and affordable early care, education, and after-school programs.

| COMMUNITY VALUE | OBJECTIVE | ACTION STRATEGIES | LEADS AND PARTNERS |
|--|--|--|--|
| THE PROVISION OF CHILD CARE IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY | 4a. Increase public and private investment in early care, education and after-school programs and workforce. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build community awareness and political will in support of investing in early care, education, and after-school programs through policy advocacy, advisory participation, community forums, marketing campaigns, and grassroots organizing. • Develop an Economic Impact Report for Santa Cruz County early care, education, and after-school programs and the impact of the lack of care on the functioning of the County economy. • Use the new CAC website and Social Media to raise awareness regarding ECE Workforce issues and opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Businesses and Corporations • Childhood Advisory Council • Early Care, Education, and After-School Partners • Local officials and decision-makers • Business Partners • Chamber of Commerce(s) • Funders – Government, Foundations, and Corporations • Workforce Development Board • South County Triage Workgroup • Thrive by 5 |
| | 4b. Create new partnerships in the County with businesses, non-profits, and organizations that benefit directly and indirectly from child care. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a “Day Without Child Care” event in the County. • Engage and convene community partners in long-term planning, strategizing, and advocacy. • Identify five new community partners and secure commitments to increase the supply of child care providers and spaces in the County. • Conduct a countywide Parent Survey of the needs, challenges, and preferences of parents regarding the care and education of their children. • Utilize the results of the Parent Survey in the next 2026 Needs Assessment. | |
| | 4c. Develop Community Outreach, Messaging, and Key Advocacy protocols. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define aligned key messages and talking points about the importance of high-quality child care and critical priority issues. • Connect early care and learning to positive school and life outcomes. • Develop common protocols for advocacy communications. • Define target audiences and outreach strategies. • Encourage leaders of existing countywide efforts to attend or present at CAC meetings • Hold Hot Topic presentations at CAC meetings, where community members can highlight new projects, initiatives, and promote Availability of Subsidized Care issues. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childhood Advisory Council • Local Businesses and Corporations • Private Foundations • The Workforce Development Board • Chamber of Commerce(s) • The CORE Investments and CORE Institute • Local cities and jurisdictions • Local developers, including housing developers • Non-profit housing organizations • Local colleges and universities, public and private • Children’s Network and CCECAN. • Thrive by 5 |

FOCUS AREA 4: CHILD CARE COLLABORATIONS - INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

INCREASE COLLABORATIONS

- **Strengthen relationships** with local agencies, businesses, and other organizations/agencies serving children and families.
- **Convene Bi-Annual Conference** on the State of Children, Early Care, Education, and After-School Care, and report data and trends including results of **Workforce Study and Economic Impact Report**.

EXPAND PARTNERSHIPS

- **Increase partnerships** with local business leaders and elected officials to address issues facing the child care field in the County.

REPORT OUTCOMES

- **Increase awareness** of the importance of early care, education and after-school care through social media, community meetings, and public hearing participation.



"What we want is to see the child in pursuit of knowledge, and not knowledge in pursuit of the child."

-George Bernard Shaw

CALL TO ACTION

HERE IS WHAT YOU CAN DO:

BUSINESS & PRIVATE SECTOR

Invest! The government cannot and will not be able to do it alone. Include facility space for on-site child care, paid parental leave, and adopt family-friendly workplace policies. Support the workforce through resource linkages and provider discounts.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Stay informed! Work collaboratively with those in the early care, education, and after-school field, non-profit community, education, and government. Contribute to being a united voice for early care, education, and after-school programs.



PARENTS & COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Be civically active! Educate the community on the needs and challenges by sharing your story with employers, community members, private sector leaders, and most importantly, elected officials.

Participate in any way that fits with your life, career, and capacity. Demand elected officials to respond to your needs and continually advocate for children-focused policies and vote for elected officials that share your values.





FUNDERS

Join us! Support the plan by providing the resources needed for implementation strategies that generate systems changes, such as support for the development of a Universal Kindergarten Readiness Tool and an updated economic impact report. Prioritize funding early care and education and involve providers in conversations.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Advance! Develop career pathways that support the growth and development of this field by working with partners such as the Workforce Development Board and other local colleges. Provide opportunities for professional development of providers in the early care, education, and after-school field and ways for them to connect after with Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten teachers for successful child and family transitions into the school system.



POLICY MAKERS

Be bold! Use data-driven policy decision-making. Hold yourself and your colleagues accountable to your policy choices and inspire others to choose policies that support kids.

Invest, Invest, Invest! Make tough trade-offs and allocate scarce resources to early care, education, and after-school programs.



PROVIDERS, PRACTITIONERS, & TEACHERS

Inspire! Actively seek an action strategy from this Strategic Plan that you want to work toward and lead or join with others to work on it.

Mentor and support the next generation of child care professionals.

ALL

Get Involved in the Childhood Advisory Council by contacting:
Diane Munoz at 831-466-5822 or dmunoz@santacruzcoe.org

As the Santa Cruz County Childhood Advisory Council, we invite you to join us in advancing change for our future generation and for the future of humankind.