



Santa Clara County Early Learning Master Plan

MID-IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW BRIEF

Prepared for the Santa Clara County Office of Education
with the assistance of



NOVEMBER 2023

Introduction

The early care and education (ECE) landscape in Santa Clara County has seen extraordinary change in the last 5 years. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacted children, families, and ECE professionals. It also demonstrated that ECE is essential for the whole community and economy, not just to the parents of young children. Elected leaders and policymakers at all levels have responded with historic investments, programmatic changes, and a deeper understanding of the challenges, benefits, and promise of universal access to high quality early learning.

Below is a summary of the investments and policy changes that are moving the field towards our goal of universal access to high quality ECE. These changes are arranged in the categories in the Santa Clara County Early Learning Master Plan (ELMP) mid-implementation review.

Access

- Since 2021, California has committed to add more than 200,000 slots in its General Childcare (CCTR), State Preschool (CSPP), and Alternative Payment (APP) subsidized ECE programs.
- The 2023-24 State Budget included a provision to extend the Santa Clara County Child Care Subsidy Pilot Project until July 1, 2024.
- Income thresholds have increased so that families making less than 100% of the State Median Income (SMI) - \$113,000 for a family of four are eligible for the CSPP and families making less than 85% of SMI are eligible for childcare subsidies.
- Transitional Kindergarten (TK) expansion creates up to 15,000 new, free ECE slots for four-year-olds in Santa Clara County by the 2025-26 school year.
- Beginning in October 2023, a new family fee structure ensures that no family who is eligible for subsidized care will pay more than 1% of their income in family fees and that families under 75% of SMI will pay no fees.
- CSPP eligibility has expanded so that children living in high need schools districts, children who are TK eligible, and children with disabilities can enroll, regardless of income, so long as all income eligible children have been served first.
- The Early Learning Opportunity Program (ELOP) provides 9 hours per day of combined school and after school care and 30 days of summer care for TK to 6th grade students who are low-income, English Learner, or foster youth.

Articulation, Alignment and Data Systems

- The Steps to Success initiative is working with partners across Santa Clara County to raise public awareness about all early learning options for children ages birth through five. Through multilingual, high-visibility media channels, more than 18, 000 families visited www.enrollsantaclara.org. More than 20,000 families visited the Resource & Referral (R&R) website at www.childcarescc.org.
- Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in Santa Clara County received \$7.6M in Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) planning and implementation grants with the goal of increasing access to ECE for all 3- and 4-year-olds through the mixed delivery system.

Facilities

- Since 2022-23, the State of California has budgeted \$690M to LEAs and another \$250M to non-LEA ECE providers to increase ECE facilities capacity and quality.
- The County of Santa Clara has funded a \$15M ECE facilities grant program that will provide facilities funds to ECE programs beginning in 2023-24.
- The state has provided over \$420M in Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program (IEEEP) grant funding to build and renovate ECE facilities so they are more accessible to children with disabilities. SCCOE has received over \$5M of IEEEP funds.
- SCCOE-sponsored legislation to remove regulatory barriers that prevent children with disabilities from enrolling in inclusive early learning programs (AB 2827 and SB 722) have become law.

Family Engagement

- SCCOE was awarded the county R&R contract in June 2020 and supports 500 families per month to find childcare and other resources online and in-person.
- First 5 Santa Clara County Family Resource Centers supported over 8,000 families with food, diapers, and other needs during the COVID-19 emergency response.
- The City of San José's Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services program has implemented the Strengthening Families family engagement framework in its Little Learners and Kinder Prep recreational preschool programs.

Program Quality

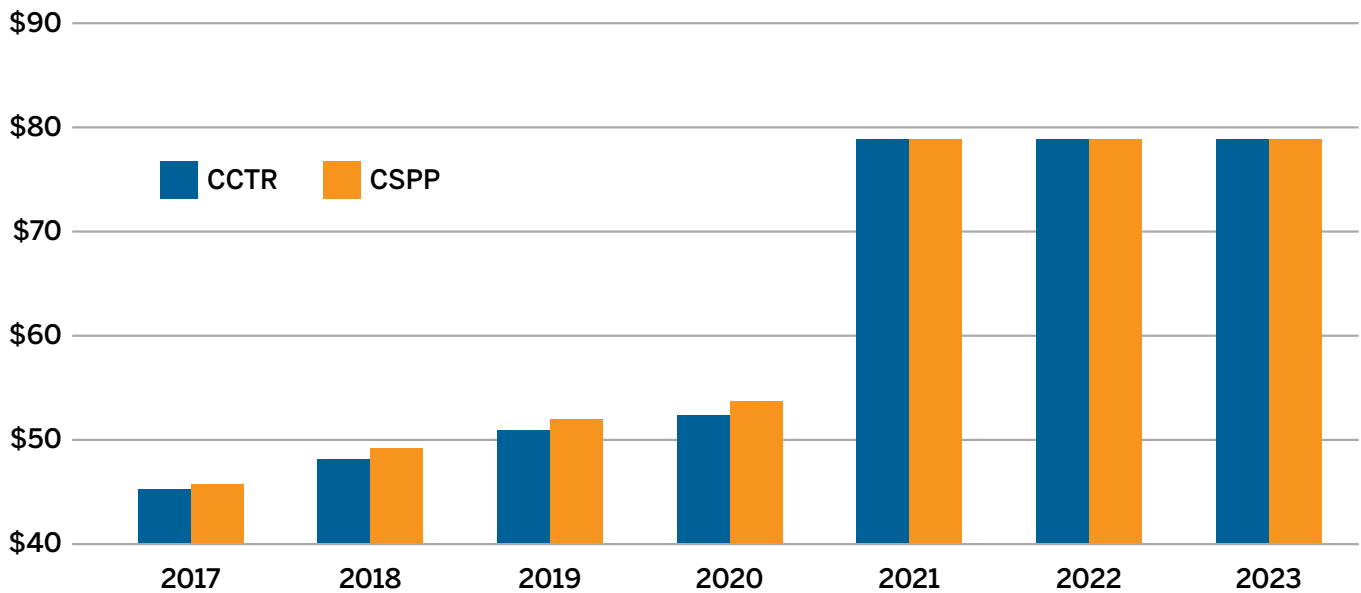
- QUALITY MATTERS, Santa Clara County's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) supports 142 centers, 564 licensed family childcare homes and 80 license-exempt providers serving over 7,500 children
- AB 2806 (enacted in 2022), sponsored by SCCOE, prohibits ECE providers from suspending or expelling children, expands these provisions beyond CSPP to CCTR and Family Child Care Home Education Network (FCCHEN) programs, and increases the adjustment factor for early mental health consultation.



Workforce Development

- The contracted reimbursement rate for CSPP providers in Santa Clara County has increased by 73% since 2017-18.
- California’s \$350M Teacher Residency Grant program, which provides up to \$40,000 in support to become a credentialed teacher, has prioritized support for new TK and Kindergarten teachers.
- The new \$500M Golden State Pathways Program funds collaboration between LEAs, institutions of higher education and employers on workforce development in areas of acute statewide need, such as ECE.
- Beginning 2021-22, the state will provide \$260 million per year in additional funding for LEAs to serve 3- and 4-year-olds with disabilities through the Special Education Early Intervention Preschool Grant.
- The 2023-24 State Budget included \$122M in available federal funds to provide temporary stipends for CSPP employees.
- The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing has developed a Pre-Kindergarten (PK) to 3rd Grade (PK-3) teaching add-on credential to train teachers in developmentally appropriate practices for young children. SCCOE has applied to offer this credential.

General Childcare (CCTR) and State Preschool (CSPP) Reimbursement Rate in Santa Clara County



Developing the Mid-Implementation Review

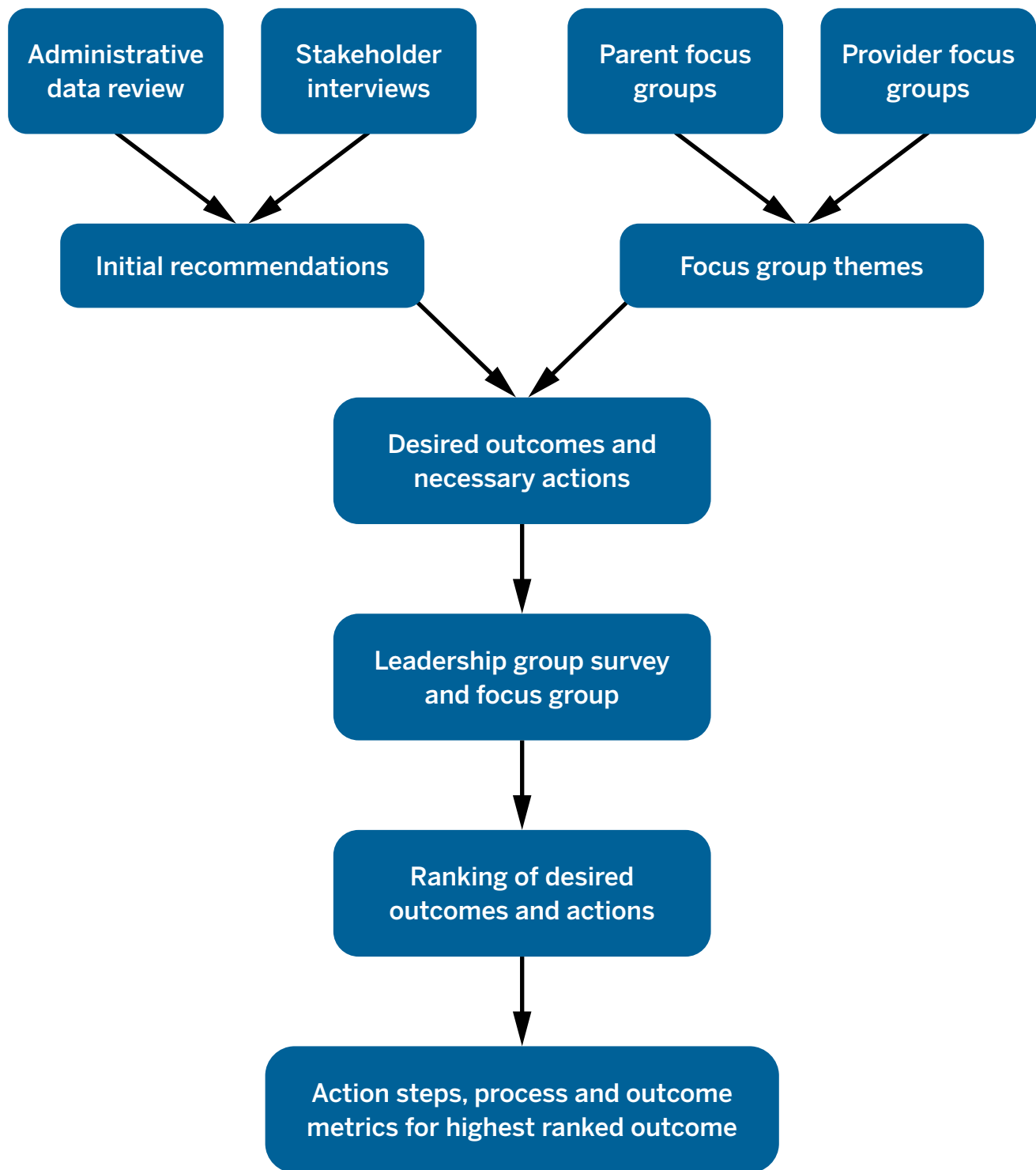
Providing equitable access to high-quality early care and education to young children and families has long been a priority for the SCCOE and its partners. In 2010, SCCOE launched its first countywide ELMP with the vision of providing every child with high-quality ECE “to the benefit of the child, their family, and our community.” The second iteration of the ELMP was designed in 2017 as an opportunity to build on progress through a strategic framework for the next seven years that included 28 goals across six priority areas: (i) Access, (ii) Articulation, Alignment, and Data Systems, (iii) Facilities, (iv) Family Engagement, (v) Program Quality, and (vi) Workforce Development.

While the ELMP timeframe is continuous through 2024, significant changes in the Santa Clara County ECE landscape have occurred since 2017, alongside disruptions brought about by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This mid-implementation review was conducted as a comprehensive effort to forecast opportunities and challenges created by these changes. For each goal area, recommendations for steps to achieve the goals identified in the 2017 ELMP, including areas for advocacy, re-prioritization or other adjustments to the ELMP goals, and suggested activities to maximize new opportunities, are provided.

The mid-implementation review development process included a number of stages to ensure its fidelity to the SCCOE principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and partnership. Following an initial planning effort in partnership with the SCCOE, the Early Childhood Institute (ECI) at San José State University (SJSU) met with a total of 18 leaders and stakeholders representing various perspectives on early care and education in Santa Clara County, many of whom participated in the 2017 ELMP development effort. Through a series of semi-structured interviews, ECI assessed progress towards the goals identified in the 2017 ELMP, challenges that have impeded progress, and new opportunities that have emerged in light of recent changes to the EL landscape. Interview transcriptions and notes were then reviewed and coded in an iterative process of listing, organizing, and sorting data to synthesize response trends within each priority area. The team worked with the SCCOE to review existing administrative data to identify progress and remaining challenges in meeting the goals set out by the 2017 ELMP. These efforts led to a set of initial recommendations.

In an overlapping process, staff from American Survey Research (ASR) held focus groups with parents of young children in English and Spanish, the parents of young children with disabilities, and center- and home-based early learning providers to gather their input on challenges and opportunities for the field in Santa Clara County. These steps were intended to ensure that parent and provider voice was included in the review and recommended actions. Themes from these focus groups were combined with the initial recommendations from the interviews conducted by ECI to create a set of set of desired outcomes and associated necessary actions for each area of work. These were reviewed and ranked using a survey and subsequent focus group of key leaders and stakeholders. Focus group members, staff from ASR, and SCCOE staff then determined appropriate action steps, process metrics, and outcomes measures for the highest ranked action in each work area. These components are presented as a logic model to achieve the desire outcome for each work area and in a Sample Evaluation Plan as an appendix at the end of this report.

Development Process Graphic



Recommendations

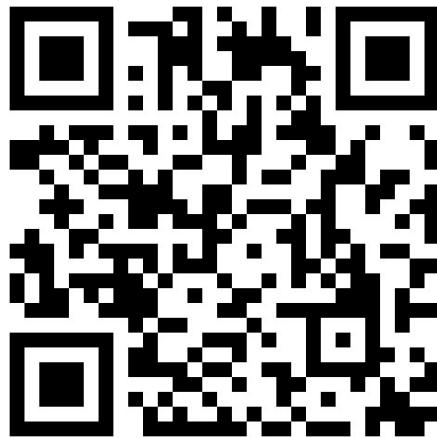
In response to these landscape changes, beginning in the summer of 2022, a mid-implementation review of the 2017 ELMP was initiated. The desired outcomes and action steps below, are the outcomes of this extensive and community-led process and reflect our commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and partnership.

Content Area	Proposed Action	Desired Outcome
Workforce Development	Expand the Early Childhood Consortium to help all ECE educators identify educational pathways that align with their career goals, promote pathways intended for racially and linguistically diverse working professionals, and provide financial support to offset costs.	A system of career development supports for ECE professionals in all settings
Access	Determine and implement changes that make infant and toddler care more sustainable for providers and more accessible for low- and mid-income families.	Increased number of licensed slots for children ages zero to three
Program Quality	Increase inclusion of children with disabilities by expanding and coordinating access to ESCE and mental health professionals, resources, and other supports (for children and providers) across all care settings.	Increased number of sites with access to needed special education and mental health supports
Family Engagement	Expand efforts to partner with families of children with disabilities by researching their needs, identifying, and expanding the number of ECE programs that are enrolling children with disabilities, and encouraging early intervention providers and special education programs within LEAs to align family partnership efforts across general and special education.	Increased number of ECE programs that enroll children with disabilities
Articulation, Alignment, and Data Systems	Provide opportunities for ECE and TK-12 staff to communicate and coordinate around developmentally appropriate curricula and practices.	Increased capacity of staff to use developmentally appropriate practices with children with disabilities
Facilities	Advocate for sustainable financial and technical supports to build and maintain developmentally appropriate and accessible ECE facilities across the county's mixed delivery system.	Increased number of licensed childcare facilities

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Find the full mid-implementation review report on
the SCCOE website via the QR code below.



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