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>>>NEWS RELEASE<<<<

**EFFECTIVE PRE-K PROGRAMS NARROW K-12 ACHIEVEMENT GAP**

*New RAND Research Shows Gaps in Kindergarten Readiness*

**SACRAMENTO, CA**—New RAND research reveals that the achievement gap evident among California's K-12 students is mirrored by a "readiness gap" among the state's kindergarteners. The research shows that improving the effectiveness of California's pre-k offerings could better prepare students to enter kindergarten, laying the foundation for later academic success and narrowing the achievement gap.

The first two reports in the four-part California Preschool Study from the RAND Corporation were released today in Sacramento. The studies show that gaps in school readiness found in kindergarten closely match those gaps in achievement seen at the elementary school level, highlighting that the same groups of students who start out behind in kindergarten tend not to catch up later in their academic careers.

According to assessments at kindergarten entry, 61 percent of children enrolled in an early literacy program in 17 California school districts were not proficient in rhyming words, recognizing letters and consonant and vowel sounds. Forty six percent of children in 61 California school districts lacked important social skills like paying attention, persistence in finishing tasks, eagerness to learn, independent learning, forming and maintaining friendships and showing sensitivity to others.

"Preschool prepares young people for school and helps them develop a love of learning. This is an important step in closing the achievement gap," said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell, who requested the study, along with the Governor's Committee on Education Excellence, the Speaker of the California State Assembly and the President pro Tempore of the California State Senate. "Solid research tells us that investing in preschool is not only the right thing to do for our children, it is an investment that will pay tremendous economic and social dividends in the long run."

The reports find significant percentages of all children do not meet state standards for reading or mathematics in the elementary grades. Almost two-thirds of third graders are not proficient in English-language arts and more than 40 percent fell short of state standards in math.

The RAND studies show that effective pre-k programs narrow the achievement gap by better preparing students for the challenges of the K-12 system. Rigorous examination of programs in other states illustrates that effective pre-k led to improved future school performance, including higher eighth grade math and reading scores, fewer grade repetitions and more high school diplomas earned.

Law enforcement and business leaders agree that pre-k puts kids on track for success in school and in life.

“Preschool is effective on so many levels. It cuts crime by giving kids the skills they need to succeed in school so they stay out of trouble,” said Lee Baca, Los Angeles County Sheriff. “I know my jails would be a lot less crowded if more adult offenders had access to effective preschool programs as kids.”

Julie Meier Wright, president and CEO of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation said that California businesses “demand highly trained, well-educated workers. If we want our children to fill these valued, high-paying jobs, we need to make sure they have a strong, educational foundation. We need to invest properly in our children from the start to ensure their success and the success of our state's economy.”

“Now is the time to ensure that the kids who need it most have access to effective pre-k,” said Catherine Atkin, President of Preschool California. “If California wants to narrow its achievement gap and see the same positive outcomes as other states, it must invest in high-quality pre-k. Pre-k is the first step in education reform.”

*Preschool California is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization working to achieve effective pre-k for all of California's children, starting with those who need it most. [www.preschoolcalifornia.org](http://www.preschoolcalifornia.org).*

***Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California** is a bipartisan, non-profit, anti-crime organization led by more than 350 sheriffs, police chiefs, district attorneys, and victims of violence. Its mission is to take a critical look at the research about what really works to keep kids from becoming criminals. Among the strategies proven to be effective are preschool, after-school programs, child abuse and neglect prevention programs and intensive interventions for juvenile offenders. [www.calfightcrime.org](http://www.calfightcrime.org).*