

Early Learning Quality Improvement Act

SB 1629 (Steinberg)

PURPOSE

Research confirms the social and economic benefits of early education for children and their families, as well as society. Children who attend effective preschool programs are better prepared for kindergarten. They have higher language and cognitive skills in the first years of elementary school. And they are less likely to repeat a grade or drop out of school, and more likely to attend college. These benefits are especially evident for low-income children and English language learners.

According to the National Institute for Early Education Research, however, California's state-funded preschool programs meet only 4 out of 10 key benchmarks for quality. That's why the State Superintendent of Public Instruction's P-16 Council and the Governor's Committee on Education Excellence both propose reforming our existing public preschools to create the high-quality experience that children need to be ready to read and ready to learn.

Fourteen states already have some kind of early learning quality improvement system to assess program quality and support programs in providing higher quality learning environments. Primarily through their local First 5 Commissions, San Diego, San Mateo, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Los Angeles counties all have local quality improvement systems in place. These systems serve as models from which California can build high-quality programs for young children.

CONTACT

Susanna Cooper (916) 651-4582

Susanna.Cooper@sen.ca.gov

Scott Moore (510) 271-0075, ext. 302

smoore@preschoolcalifornia.org

BILL SUMMARY

SB 1629 establishes a Commission to create a state Early Learning Quality Improvement System, which will develop a framework for improving the quality of preschool programs. This includes a quality rating scale to help parents make informed decisions about programs for their children, and a graduated funding model to help existing and future preschool programs reach and maintain higher levels of quality.

The Commission will conduct an assessment and analysis of the existing early care and education infrastructure, including strategies to ensure the existing workforce, which reflects the cultural and linguistic diversity of California, has the opportunity to meet higher levels of education qualifications. The Commission will also develop a policy and implementation plan and report to the Legislature and Governor by December 31, 2009. No general fund dollars will be used to fund the Commission, which shall apply to First 5 to fund its work. SB 1629 is joined to AB 2759 (Jones), which consolidates and streamlines existing Title V programs for 3 and 4 year olds.

SUPPORT (partial list)

California SPI Jack O'Connell (Co-Sponsor)
Preschool California (Co-Sponsor)
Children Now (Co-Sponsor)
CA Child Development Administrators Assn (Co-Sponsor)
Bay Area Council
California Continuation Education Association
CA County Supts Educational Services Assn
California Head Start Association
California School Boards Association
California PTA
California Teachers Association
Child Development Policy Institute
County Offices of Education: Alameda, El Dorado, Merced, Sacramento, Yolo
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California
First 5 California
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Low Income Investment Fund
Professional Association for Childhood Education
San Bernardino Mayor Patrick J. Morris
The Advancement Project