# HIGH QUALITY EARLY LEARNING SYSTEMS BUILDING: STATE APPROACHES AND EXAMPLES

## PREPARED BY VIVA STRATEGY + COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE FIRST 5 ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

## NOVEMBER 2016

VIVA
STRATEGY + COMMUNICATIONS

FIRST 5
ASSOCIATION
OF CALIFORNIA

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## INTRODUCTION

In November 1998, California voters passed Proposition 10, the California Children and Families Act, which added a 50-cent tax on all tobacco products. The purpose of this funding is to create "an integrated, comprehensive, and collaborative system of information and services to enhance optimal early childhood development and to ensure that children are ready to enter school."
The Act established the Children and Families Commissions, subsequently called First 5 Commissions, in each of the state's 58 counties. It also created a State Children and Families Commission (First 5 California) that focuses on statewide initiatives, media communications, public education, and research and evaluation functions.

First 5 Association of California unites all 58 First 5 county commissions around a common agenda and works to bolster programs surrounding family strengthening, early identification, oral health, quality early learning, and system sustainability. As part of this work, the First 5 Association advocates for the needs of young children and their families along with other state, regional, and county partners.

First 5 Association contracted with VIVA Strategy + Communications to research and understand how states have built and expanded early learning systems and to facilitate policy conversations with a policy committee to apply this learning to California. Policy committee members included executive staff from county and state First 5 Commissions, County Office of Education, Resource and Referral, and advocacy organizations. The goal of this work is to determine the critical components and structures required to build a quality early learning system for California for licensed programs serving children from birth through age five. These components will be sequenced over time by priority for implementation, policy priority, and feasibility.

Due to the overwhelming unmet need for quality early learning access and supports for young children in California, the policy committee will focus on access and improvements to quality licensed early learning for children birth through age five. They will use quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) as a foundation, but will not limit conversation to the current structure or content of all CA-QRIS elements to define quality. Additionally, the policy committee will not focus on or make recommendations that include complementary components such as health. This means that this effort will not outline a comprehensive early childhood system inclusive of all focus areas.

## FINDINGS: STATE APPROACHES TO EARLY LEARNING SYSTEMS BUILDING

As states recognize the importance of high quality early care and education, they are increasingly focusing policy efforts on building and expanding coordinated early learning systems. Many states have worked with their legislatures and governors to pass legislation to build these systems. Nationally, legislative trends for early learning systems building include:

- Governance
- Tiered reimbursement
- Family eligibility
- Accountability systems
- Quality incentives
- Expanding access
- QRIS requirements for subsidy programs

## Approach: Passing Early Learning Systems Legislation

States have taken different approaches to pass early care and education systems building legislation. Some states have passed legislation over time. Other states have passed a single comprehensive bill to create and build their systems. The chosen approach often depends on the state's political climate, funding capacity, previous systems building efforts, and areas of focus.

## Legislation Over Time

Most states build their early care and education systems over time through legislative bills that develop one portion of a system. Often this legislation builds on previous legislation; for example, one bill to create a pilot study and another bill to implement the pilot statewide.

Colorado is an example of a state that has built its system over time. Governor John Hickenlooper (in office since 2011) has prioritized early childhood education and has supported many of the enacted bills.

| Bill | Funding |
|---|---|
| **2010:** Senate Bill 195 established the Early Childhood Leadership Commission to advance a comprehensive service delivery system for children birth to age eight. | Received a $1.3 million three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to staff and fund the Commission |
| **2012:** Senate Bill 22 created a pilot program in 10 counties for child care assistance to study whether changes in eligibility requirements for child care subsidies can mitigate the "cliff effect" and enhance service continuity for children and families. | No funding |
| **2013:** Senate Bill 260 expanded Colorado's state-funded prekindergarten program by adding 3,200 additional slots. | $11.6 million as part of annual School Finance Act |
| **2013:** House Bill 1007 recreated an Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission to study issues and recommend legislation concerning early childhood and school readiness. | No funding |
| **2013:** House Bill 1117 transferred the Early Childhood Leadership Commission and other programs serving children and families to the Department of Human Services in order to create a more coordinated structure within the State government. | No additional funding. The new Office of Early Childhood was transferred $153.4 million |
| **2014:** House Bill 1298 expanded Colorado's state-funded prekindergarten program by 5,000 slots and mandated a report on QRIS implementation in school district and charter school early care programs. | $18.5 million as part of annual School Finance Act |
| **2014:** House Bill 1317 established a tiered reimbursement system for child care programs receiving subsidies and raised family eligibility requirements in order to promote increased access to high quality early care programs. | $9.9 million |
| **2014:** Senate Bill 3 established a Child Care Assistance Cliff Effect Pilot Program Fund and grant program for the child care assistance pilot program (established by Colorado Senate Bill 22 in 2012) to encourage county participation. | $1.2 million |
| **2016:** Senate Bill 22 removed restrictions from the Child Care Assistance Cliff Effect Pilot Program so that more than the original 10 pilot counties could benefit from the pilot and its fund. | No additional funding |

### Comprehensive Legislation

While less common, a few states have passed comprehensive legislation to build and maintain early learning systems. These bills are generally based on a plan developed by a state early learning commission, and include provisions for all aspects of a state's early learning system.

Washington is an example of a comprehensive legislation approach. The Early Start Act of 2015 invested nearly $100 million to advance Washington's early learning systems building. This will automatically renew with an additional $100 million in 2016 due to the two-year budget cycle in Washington. The legislative language includes a sustained annual investment in a dedicated early learning account. The Act:

- Requires additional funding to be phased in each year until the 2020-2021 school year, at which point all children eligible for subsidized state prekindergarten (families below 110% of the federal poverty level) will have access to enrollment.
- Institutes a kindergarten assessment, the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS).
- Requires a longitudinal study with cost benefit analysis by 2022.
- Maintains Early Achievers, Washington's QRIS developed through Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge, and makes it the quality standard for all early learning programs.
- Funds professional development and coaching.
- Provides for tiered reimbursement based on QRIS rating.
- Allows fee-based optional re-rating, outside of the established rating cycle (which is free to participants).
- Creates a one-stop website for parents to access all provider information including licensing, QRIS, and other indicators of quality.
- Requires early care providers that receive subsidies to achieve an Early Achievers rating of at least three by 2020.
- Requires all existing state prekindergarten providers to achieve a rating of at least four by March 2016 or begin remedial activities.
- Ensures that the state's subsidized early care program benefits extend for a full 12 months to ensure continuity of care.
- Creates a dedicated Early Start state financing account with funds that may only be used for early care and education programming.
- Requires the Department of Early Learning to develop culturally responsive protocols.

## FINDINGS: COMPENDIUM OF STATE-LEVEL POLICIES FOR EARLY LEARNING QUALITY AND ACCESS

This compendium lists many of the components of a high quality early learning system for licensed care for children birth through age five, along with examples of how states have implemented these components through policy or legislation. The examples in this compendium represent significant or interesting examples from across the country – the compendium does not include all early learning state policies or legislation.

The state strategies in this compendium are organized into four color-coded sections, based on which part of a quality early learning system they target and improve: **QUALITY**, **ACCESS**, **SYSTEMS COORDINATION**, and **ACCOUNTABILITY**. Many states blend multiple strategies in single pieces of legislation and policy, so there is some overlap between sections.

**EXAMPLE:**

### QUALITY

| STRATEGY | CALIFORNIA STATUS | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|---|
| Tax incentives | | |
| Property tax exemption for high-quality providers | There is no property tax exemption for early childhood education (ECE) providers in California. | Indiana provides property tax exemptions for high quality for-profit programs that serve four-to-six year olds and agree to participate in the Early Education Evaluation program (collecting data concerning school readiness of low-income children in high quality programs). |

Property tax exemption is a strategy for using tax incentives (one component of an early learning system) to improve quality

Status in California of this tax incentive strategy

This is an example of how a state has implemented this strategy to improve quality. The link leads to the piece of legislation or policy mentioned in the example.

**THE EXAMPLES LISTED IN THIS REPORT ARE NOT INTENDED TO BE A COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF ALL EXAMPLES, BUT INSTEAD REPRESENT A SELECTION OF THOSE MOST RELEVANT.**

## QUALITY

| STRATEGY | CALIFORNIA STATUS | EXAMPLE |
|---|---|---|
| **Teacher compensation** | | |
| Wage mandates/minimum wage increases | The median annual salary for a state preschool teacher in California is $30,710. There is no salary parity expectation or requirement for state preschool or other state subsidized programs. | Many states operate state preschool programs, but only four require salary parity for all lead teachers across all settings: Georgia, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. Another eight states require salary parity for all lead teachers working in preschool programs located in public schools: Hawaii, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Texas.<br><br>Idaho's Professional Development System incorporates required wage increases (known as "Anniversary Incentives") for those who successfully complete an academic scholarship. |
| Direct wage supplementation | California does not offer any wage supplementation to the early childhood workforce. | See 'Tax incentives' on page 5 for examples. |
| **Teacher education** | | |
| Modify teacher requirements | See California's Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) Child Development Permit requirements | Louisiana requires a bachelor's degree and teaching certificate for teachers in public and nonprofit pre-kindergarten (pre-K) for four year olds. It will also requires all lead teachers in licensed, publicly funded programs to have an Ancillary Teaching Certificate by 2019. |
| Develop 0-8 teaching credential | California does not offer a 0-8 teaching credential. It requires a Child Development Permit for teaching in the pre-K setting. A Multiple Subject Teaching Credential, authorizes teaching in preschool, kindergarten and grades 1-12. | Delaware offers seven early childhood credentials: Infant Toddler, Preschool, School Age, Family Child Care, Inclusion, Curriculum and Assessment, and Administrator. |
| Develop early learning certificate program | California does not have an early learning certificate program that is offered to the credentialed elementary workforce. | Louisiana is developing a Birth to Kindergarten Teaching Certificate and an Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate. These are targeted to existing professionals in the workforce to raise quality. |
| Support teacher participation in education programs | Some counties offer local incentives for ECE teachers to pursue credentials and reward performance. | Louisiana uses scholarships, tax credits, and new preparation programs to support teachers to pursue credentials and reward performance. |

## QUALITY

| STRATEGY | CALIFORNIA STATUS | EXAMPLE |
|---|---|---|
| **Child care subsidies** | | |
| Lower copayments for parents who choose quality | California does not lower copayments for parents who choose quality care. | Oregon: Child care subsidy recipients who voluntarily choose providers that meet minimum standards under the state's QRIS may qualify for lower copayments. |
| Require participation in QRIS for any providers that receive subsidies | QRIS is a voluntary system for all providers in California. | Washington requires any program that receives state child care subsidies as well as any programs in the state's comprehensive pre-K program, ECEAP, to participate in the state's QRIS. Any provider serving non-school age children on subsidy must receive a rating of at least three by 2020. All existing ECEAP providers must achieve at least a four by March 2016 or begin remedial activities. |
| | | Nebraska requires child care programs or early childhood education programs receiving over $250,000 in child care assistance to participate in the state's QRIS. |
| **Tiered reimbursement** | | |
| State planning for tiered reimbursement | California state agencies have not been directed to study a tiered reimbursement subsidy system. | A Virginia bill required the Department of Social Services to study a tiered reimbursement subsidy system, based on QRIS, for child care providers. The study includes tiered reimbursement strategies, impacts, and recommendations. |
| Rate add-on | There is no dollar amount applied to the daily-subsidized child care rate in California for programs that participate in QRIS. | A set dollar amount is applied to the daily subsidized child care rate for any program at a particular quality level. In Pennsylvania, this increase is $0.15/day for a one-star program and $2.60/day for four-star programs for part-time preschool. |
| Market rate percentage increase | California does not have a tiered reimbursement system linked with QRIS. | Washington: Providers participating in Early Achievers receive higher subsidy payment rates for each child receiving child care assistance. The percent increase in reimbursement rates differs by tier.<br>• Tier 3: 4% above<br>• Tier 4: 10% above<br>• Tier 5: 15% above |
| | | Wisconsin Shares Subsidy Reimbursement Program both rewards and punishes providers with reimbursement based on their QRIS ratings:<br>• 1 Star: ineligible<br>• 2 Star: 5% decrease<br>• 3 Star: base rate<br>• 4 Star: 10% increase<br>• 5 Star: 25% increase |

## QUALITY

| STRATEGY | CALIFORNIA STATUS | EXAMPLE |
|---|---|---|
| Subsidy bonus or quality incentive | The California State Preschool Program (CSPP) Block Grant provides funding to local consortia to award quality stipends to CSPP programs who participate in QRIS and rate at Tiers 4 and 5. These stipend amounts are locally determined. The Infant/Toddler Block Grant allows counties to award quality improvement stipends for programs that rate at Tiers 4 and 5. Some counties offer local incentives for providers who participate in QRIS, such as participation stipends. | Washington will be implementing annual quality improvement awards that link to its QRIS:<br>• Level 2: $1,000<br>• Level 3: $2,250<br>• Level 4: $2,500<br>• Level 5: $2,750 |
| **Licensing** | | |
| Use success of QRIS to raise licensing standards | QRIS has not been used to raise licensing standards (California recently ranked 50th in a National Child Care Program Requirements and Oversight Report). In order to participate in QRIS, a site must be licensed and in good standing with Community Care Licensing. This is considered Tier 1, which is not considered a quality program. | North Carolina originally included licensing compliance history percentages as a component in its Star Rated License standards. A review of the rating data over several years showed that more than 95% of the programs received the maximum points in licensing compliance, indicating that the standard was not effective at discriminating levels of quality. In 2005, the licensing compliance history was eliminated as a standard, creating standards that more accurately differentiate levels of the quality. A minimum compliance level with key licensing standards became a requirement to keep a license, rather than a way to earn a higher star. A license in good standing is still required to reach the first star level in the QRIS. |
| **Tax incentives** | | |
| Property tax exemption for high-quality providers | There is no property tax exemption for ECE providers in California. | Indiana provides property tax exemptions for high quality for-profit programs that serve four-to-six year olds and agree to participate in the Early Education Evaluation program (collecting data concerning school readiness of low-income children in high quality programs). |

## QUALITY

| STRATEGY | CALIFORNIA STATUS | EXAMPLE |
|---|---|---|
| Tax credit packages to incentivize quality | There are no tax credit packages to incentive quality in California. | In 2008, Louisiana implemented the School Readiness Tax Credits, which provide tax credits to providers, directors/staff, parents, child care resource and referral agencies (R&Rs), and businesses. The credits are integrated with the state's QRIS, career development system, and state subsidy program. The incentives are provided through the tax code, so they are not dependent on legislative appropriations. They are designed to provide benefits even to claimants who do not have tax liability, by virtue of being refundable. |
| | | In 2016, Nebraska enacted the School Readiness Tax Credits, based on Louisiana's example. One credit is for Nebraska's early childhood professional workforce and one is for quality early childhood programs that participate in Nebraska's Step Up to Quality Program. The tax credits are purposefully targeted to support investment in quality early care and education. |
| | | In Maine, families who enroll their children in a child care center or home with a quality certificate are eligible for a double child care tax credit. |
| | | Colorado taxpayers can claim income tax credits for making monetary contributions to promote child care. The Child Care Contribution Credit (CCCC) permits a tax benefit of up to 50 percent of the total contribution up to a maximum credit of $100,000 annually. Donations qualify if they're made to licensed child care providers or other child-serving programs, such as foster homes. The donations must be used for the acquisition or improvement of facilities, equipment or services, including staff salaries, staff training, or quality. |
| Loans linked to quality ratings | The Child Care Facilities Revolving Fund (CCFRF) provides funding to eligible California Department of Education child care contracting agencies for renovation and repair of existing facilities or the acquisition of relocatable buildings; however, these loans are not linked to QRIS. | North Carolina offers child care loans for a wide range of purposes, including minor renovations to buildings, working capital, bridge loads, equipment purchases and startup expenses. If during the loan period the provider raises its QRIS quality level, the loan can get a partial conversion to a grant. |

## QUALITY

| STRATEGY | CALIFORNIA STATUS | EXAMPLE |
|---|---|---|
| Family engagement | | |
| Require pre-K to kindergarten transition programs to engage families | The California Comprehensive Early Learning Plan (2013) recommended that California require pre-K to kindergarten transition programs to engage families. This may be coordinated at the local level, but this is not a requirement of any program. | 20 states provide guidance for the pre-K to kindergarten transition process.<br>In West Virginia, county collaborative early childhood teams are required to develop written plans for transitioning children into pre-K and into kindergarten. These plans must include family engagement, teacher/ provider meetings and assessment data linkages. |
| Require level of parent involvement in the provider promotion/ retention process | California does not require that parents be involved in the promotion/retention process for early childhood providers. | 21 states require some level of involvement in the promotion/retention process. In most of these states, parental notification is the minimum requirement. Parental appeal of decisions is allowed in Texas, South Carolina, New Mexico, Georgia, and Delaware. |
| Public-private efforts | | |
| Use “Pay for Success” bonds to finance high quality early learning | California has experimented with Pay for Success bonds on a small scale. The James Irvine Foundation funded $5 million in Pay for Success efforts from 2014-16. The initial bonds funded eight nonprofit and government efforts to finalize Pay for Success agreements, including feasibility and cost-benefit analyses for First 5 LA and First 5 Orange County’s maternal health hospital screening and home visitation programs, Welcome Baby and Bridges Maternal Child Health Network. | Utah allows its School Readiness Board to enter into “Pay for Success” bonds with private investors. These bonds provide financing to the high quality early learning system. These bonds commit to repaying investors if the program is successful in meeting impact metrics. Success is measured by tracking low-income students from preschool to sixth grade. |

| STRATEGY | CALIFORNIA STATUS | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|---|
| Child care subsidy eligibility | | |
| Extend child care subsidy even if family exceeds income eligibility level | Child care subsidies are available for families who are below the income eligibility requirements. See - Minimum Basic Standards of Adequate Case (MBSAC) | Nebraska: If a family's income exceeds 130 percent of the federal poverty level, the family will continue to receive transitional care for up to 24 months or until the family's income exceeds 185% of the federal poverty level. The transitional care assistance is based on a cost-shared plan between the family and the state. |
| | | Colorado: If a family's income exceeds 165% of federal poverty level, counties must continue to provide child care assistance for 90 days and are strongly encouraged to provide it for six months. Colorado also sets the income eligibility to exit higher than the level to enter. |
| | | Oregon: Child care subsidy eligibility authorization is valid for a period of 12 months to ensure continuity of services. |
| Increase family income eligibility, as a percentage of federal poverty level (FPL) or state median income (SMI) | Although there are limited exceptions for special populations, most families must be at or below 70% of the 2007-2008 SMI to enroll in a CDE/CDD contracted program.<br><br>In California, three counties have pilot programs that allow them to modify eligibility and other requirements. These three counties are San Francisco, San Mateo and Alameda. Alameda's pilot was approved in the last legislative session. | Many states raised income eligibility overall. Between 2014-2015, two-thirds of states increased their income eligibility limits to keep pace with or exceed inflation, as measured against the FPL or SMI. Specifically, two states increased their income limits for child care assistance by a dollar amount that exceeded inflation between 2014 and 2015. Four states increased their income limits to adjust for multiple years of inflation, and twenty-nine states increased their income limits for one year of inflation, as measured against the change in the SMI or FPL. |
| | | Maine increased its income limit to qualify for assistance from 250 percent of the 2014 FPL ($49,475 a year for a family of three) to 85 percent of the 2016 SMI ($54,589 a year for a family of three) as of July 2015. |
| Change method for calculating income for eligibility | In California family income eligibility is determined by family size and income for program reimbursed by the Standard Reimbursement Rate (SRR) such as California State Preschool Program. Other subsidy programs use family income, family size, and a regionally calculated Reimbursement Market Rate (RMR). | Nebraska changed its method of calculating eligibility. It removes assets or income from educational savings accounts, qualified tuition programs, scholarships for post-secondary education, and post-secondary work-study programs from determining eligibility for child care subsidies. The state also disregards 10% of a household's gross earned income after twelve continuous months on the program to determine ongoing eligibility for child care subsidies. |

## ACCESS

| STRATEGY | CALIFORNIA STATUS | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|---|
| Create income eligibility exceptions for families in education or workforce training | Parents who are searching for work, or going to school or training are eligible for child care assistance in California, with the exception of CalWorks participants. | Colorado: A parent enrolled in a postsecondary education program or workforce-training program is eligible for child care subsidies for at least two years of the education or training program provided they meet standard income eligibility requirements.<br>Oregon: Child care subsidy recipients who are enrolled in coursework or who are self-employed may be entitled to receive the subsidy provided they meet standard income eligibility requirements. |
| Allow families with parents searching for a job to qualify and begin receiving subsidies | California allows parents to qualify and begin receiving subsidies for up to 60 days while searching for a job. | 13 states allow families who are searching for a job to sign up for child care assistance, including California. |
| Continue eligibility for families with parents searching for a job | In 2015, California allowed parents to qualify for or continue receiving child care assistance for up to 60 days while searching for a job. | Most states do this; the period ranges from 21 to 91 days. |
| Ensure all children eligible for subsidized care are receiving it | The unmet need in California was estimated to be approximately 300,000 eligible children, prior to the Central Eligibility List elimination and $1 billion in Great Recession budget cuts. According to Children Now, approximately 9% of eligible infants and toddlers, 40% of eligible 3 year olds, and 70% of eligible 4 year olds are current served by a state or federally funded child care program. At one time, the California Department of Education collected data gathered by county offices of education for a Centralized Eligibility List to establish care priorities and unmet need. That system was eliminated in 2008. | Washington passed a bill in 2015 that will create a caseload forecast council to forecast the difference between the number of children eligible for the early education and assistance program and the number of children actually served by it. |

## ACCESS

| STRATEGY | CALIFORNIA STATUS | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|---|
| **Copayments** | | |
| Lower the cost of copayments as a percentage of income | In 2015, a family of three with an income at 100 percent of FPL ($20,090/year) receiving child care assistance in California had no copayment. A family of three with an income at 150 percent of FPL ($30,135/year) receiving child care assistance paid $128 per month, or five percent of its income, in copayments. | Most states require families receiving child care assistance to contribute toward their child care costs based on a sliding fee scale. |
| **Reimbursement rates** | | |
| Increase reimbursement rate | California has two reimbursement rates. The Regional Market Rate (RMR) is used to pay Title 22 providers, which are subject to health and safety standards, whereas the Standard Reimbursement Rate (SRR) is used to pay Title 5 providers, which are subject to health, safety, and developmental standards. The Budget Act 2016 increased the RMR for providers accepting vouchers from a rate based on a combination of the 85th percentiles of the 2005 and 2009 regional market rate surveys to the 75th percentile of the 2014 survey. The new rate goes into effect on January 1, 2017. The Act also increased the rate for licensed-exempt providers from 65 to 70 percent of the licensed family child care home provider rate. Additionally, it increased the SRR by 10%. This is the reimbursement rate for State Preschool providers. | Many states have updated their reimbursement rates but only one state has a reimbursement rate at the level recommended by the federal government.<br><br>Federal regulations require states to conduct market rate surveys every two years and recommend that the rate be set at the 75$^{th}$ percentile of the current market rate.<br><br>**South Dakota** is the only state in the country to set its rates at this level in 2015—compared to 2001 when two-fifths of states did. |
| Allow providers to charge parents receiving assistance the difference between the reimbursement rate and the fee charged to private-paying parents | California State Preschool Program does not allow providers to charge parents the difference between the reimbursement rate and the fee the provider charges. Alternative Payment Programs are allowed to charge the difference. | 39 states have policies that allow this. While this approach may prevent child care providers from losing income, it shifts the financial burden to low-income families. |

## ACCESS

| STRATEGY | CALIFORNIA STATUS | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|---|
| Increase reimbursement rate for nontraditional hours | California does not increase the reimbursement rate for care provided at nontraditional hours. | Maine pays a higher reimbursement rate for care offered at nontraditional hours. Any care provided on the weekend or between 6 p.m. – 6 a.m. is reimbursed at 35% higher than the base rate. |
| Capacity | | |
| Expand number of children who can be served | The Budget Act 2016 increased funding to add a total of 8,877 full-day/full-year State Preschool slots over the next three years (2,959 slots will be added on March 1 of 2017, 2018, and 2019). California is still recovering from significant reduction of overall funding and capacity to serve eligible children. The intent of the Budget Act 2016 is for all eligible 4 year old children to have access to quality preschool. Currently only 70% of eligible children are served. | **Many states** have done this. Washington is expanding slots until 2020 when all eligible children will be able to access care. Colorado has added 3,200 slots each year starting in FY13-14 for a total of 23,360 children who can annually participate. |
| Expand preschool options through mixed-delivery model | California has a mixed-delivery system of providers, including family child care, state-funded preschool, Head Start programs, and private centers. | Oregon developed a new mixed-delivery program called Preschool Promise, which is for three-to-five year olds up to 200 percent of the FPL. The program will expand preschool options available to these children. It also requires Early Learning Hubs to coordinate the providers of preschool programs and allows the Hubs to apply for state funding, coordinate local planning, and enter into contracts with preschool providers. |
| Enrollment | | |
| Local enrollment with a focus on parent choice | Local R&Rs help families in California by providing referrals to an array of licensed child care and development programs and referrals to child care subsidies for eligible low-income families. Very few R&Rs have incorporated QRIS ratings into the referral process as part of parent choice. Fresno County is an example where the QRIS rating is a part of Child Find, the local R&R's child care referral website. | Louisiana has locally-managed enrollment systems for child care centers, Head Start providers, and pre-kindergartens that work in coordination with R&Rs to:<br>1. Coordinate Information: Families know of all available seats<br>2. Coordinate Eligibility: Families easily know what they qualify for<br>3. Coordinate Applications: Families indicate their top choices and apply to all programs through one application<br>4. Match Based on Preference: Families enroll their child in the highest ranked preference available and no one occupies more than one seat |

| STRATEGY | CALIFORNIA STATUS | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|---|
| Parent awareness | | |
| Develop online database for parents to search for quality care | California does not have a statewide database for parents to search for quality care. The California Child Care Resource & Referral Network received funding in the 2016-17 budget to develop a consumer education database. On the county level, Fresno County has a searchable online directory that is a partnership between the QRIS administering agency and local R&R that allows parents to search for quality care. | **Most states** have developed a separate website for their QRIS that is geared toward parents and/or providers. In most cases, these sites allow parents to search for rated programs in their area and provide some level of information about the provider's rating. |
| | | Rhode Island is one of only a handful of states that provide a detailed breakdown of rating level on all areas of its matrix. |
| Run parent awareness media campaigns | First 5 CA launched the Talk, Read, Sing Campaign in 2014 and dedicates a percentage of its funding to media. The campaign includes television commercials, radio ads, digital ads, and a parents website. Some California counties have launched local parent awareness media campaigns specific to quality. | Minnesota: Parent Aware for School Readiness (PASR), a business-led advocacy group that supports Parent Aware, sponsors a campaign including radio, online, TV, and neighborhood ads that drive consumers to parentawareratings.org. A 2013 random sample survey of Minnesota parents of 0-5 year olds found that:<br>• 61 percent of parents who recall the ads say the ads "made them stop and think about the need to have pre-kindergarten children in stimulating learning environments"<br>• 72 percent of parents who recall the ads agreed that "all parents should be asking questions about a child care provider's Parent Aware Rating"<br>• 78 percent of Minnesota parents of young children who recall the ads say that if all other things are equal, they would choose a rated provider over an unrated one, while only 4 percent would choose an unrated provider. |
| | | Maryland ran a month-long transit advertising campaign to launch its QRIS website. This campaign promotes public awareness of Maryland EXCELS, and will drive families to the web site to find more information, access the Find a Program portal, and download the Quality Finder app. |

## ACCESS

| STRATEGY | CALIFORNIA STATUS | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|---|
| **Equity** | | |
| Include culturally diverse providers | California does not have specific methods or protocols to include culturally diverse providers. | Washington is developing protocols to maximize and encourage participation in the state's QRIS for culturally diverse and low-income center and FCCH providers. |
| Support providers to meet children's diverse needs | The California Early Childhood Educator Competencies includes cultural diversity and second-language acquisition. | Minnesota requires that preschool program teachers are knowledgeable about a child's native language along with many other requirements. |

## SYSTEMS COORDINATION

| STRATEGY | CALIFORNIA STATUS | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|---|
| **Licensing standards** | | |
| Align licensing standards with QRIS | In order to participate in QRIS in California a site must be licensed and in good standing with Community Care Licensing. This is considered Tier 1. | **Most states** have done this, including California. |
| **Governance structure** | | |
| Coordinated between state agencies | The newly formed California QRIS (CA–QRIS) Consortium is led in partnership by First 5 California and the Department of Education. It is assumed that other state communication occurs among other agencies, but this is not required or cross-coordinated at a regional or county level. | Louisiana has unified early child care functions in the Early Childhood Office under the State Board of Education. The Early Childhood Office coordinates with other relevant state agencies to ensure to a coordinated early childhood system in Louisiana. Certain aspects, such as funding, licensing, and enrollment have been streamlined/made uniform. |
| Consolidated into one agency | Governance for early learning quality and access efforts is not led by one agency. | North Carolina: The Office of Early Learning focuses on pre-K through third grade to support children's success in the early grades. The Office of Early Learning combines the Department's staffs in primary education and prekindergarten and promotes other linkages for reforming early education for North Carolina's children. |
| | | Colorado transferred the Early Childhood Leadership Commission and other programs serving children and families to the Department of Human Services in order to create a more coordinated structure within state government. |
| Create new state agency | A new state agency has not been created in California to provide governance for early learning quality and access efforts. | Connecticut established an Office of Early Childhood (OEC) and transferred all early childhood duties, roles, and responsibilities from the Department of Education, Department of Social Services, and Department of Health to this new office. |
| | | Washington established in 2006 a Department of Early Learning. It was the first state in the nation to have a cabinet-level early learning department. |

## SYSTEMS COORDINATION

| STRATEGY | CALIFORNIA STATUS | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|---|
| **Birth through third grade vertical alignment** | | |
| Redesign or create new governance structures that facilitate alignment of ECE and early elementary policies and practices. | Outside of committee structures for numerous efforts (registry, credentialing, etc.) no decision-making body has been created for the purpose of alignment. | North Carolina's early learning office developed formative assessments from kindergarten through third grade that are aligned both to the Common Core State Standards and to other skills (e.g., social and emotional development and approaches to learning) that are found in the state's early learning standards. |
| | | New Jersey's early learning office within its state education agency helps align policies and practices from preschool through third grade. The office has co-sponsored institutes for principals and superintendents to help them support pre-K–3 classrooms in which teachers use consistent approaches and draw from best practices in both early learning and K–3 education. |

## ACCOUNTABILITY

| STRATEGY | CALIFORNIA STATUS | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|---|
| **Data collection** | | |
| Assign identifier number to children in subsidy programs | California does not currently assign an identifier number to children in early learning subsidy programs that tracks across early learning experiences or into the TK-12 system. | Washington included a unique identifier as part of the Early Start Act in 2015.<br><br>Indiana assigned a number to each child in a pilot program for a longitudinal study. |
| Conduct longitudinal study of child outcomes | No statewide research study is underway to study child outcomes from early childhood programs longitudinally. The RTT-ELC child outcome study examined child outcomes but not longitudinally over several years. | Indiana established a pilot program for providers who score at least three on the state's QRIS and serve four and five year olds below 127 percent of FPL. Participating programs must administer a kindergarten readiness assessment, include family engagement as a component, and participate in a longitudinal study to measure child outcomes<br><br>Washington included a longitudinal study as part of the Early Start Act in 2015. |
| Develop coordinated data system | California does not have a statewide coordinated data system. Counties are using different data systems, including Pinwheel, Mosaic, and WELS for QRIS. | Pennsylvania links child-level data across all ECE programs and to the state's K-12 data system.<br><br>Colorado has a linked data system that associates an early childhood professional registry with its QRIS. |
| **School readiness** | | |
| Establish legislative committee to inform systems lead on policies | California does not have a specific legislative committee to inform the early learning systems lead on policy issues. | Colorado established an interim legislative commission to meet throughout 2015 to study early childhood and school readiness. This commission is required to consult with the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (system lead). The commission developed a report and provided guidance on legislation. |

## ACCOUNTABILITY

| STRATEGY | CALIFORNIA STATUS | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|---|
| Implement a comprehensive kindergarten readiness assessment (KRA) | California does not mandate a statewide KRA, although a state tool, the DRDP-K, has been developed. The DRDP is used as a tool as part of California's QRIS matrix. | 35 states have some form of school readiness assessment.<br>Maryland has combined three assessments into the Comprehensive Early Childhood Assessment System.<br>• Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) measuring school readiness in four domains: social foundations; language/literacy, mathematics, and physical well-being and motor development.<br>• Early Learning Assessment (ELA) (36 to 72 months) measuring the learning progress of young children in seven domains of learning: social foundations, language/literacy, mathematics, physical well-being and motor development, science, social studies, and fine arts.<br>• Developmental Screening (July 2016).<br>The Assessment System:<br>• Aligns with the more rigorous Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards for K-12 instruction.<br>• Enhances the birth-to-12th grade learning continuum<br>• Is supported by professional development for teachers, child care professionals, and administrators.<br>• Monitors children's learning progress and gauges the school readiness of incoming kindergarteners through computer-based assessments.<br>• Connects to the state longitudinal data system to allow for consistent and meaningful reporting. |
| Assess a sample of students to measure school readiness | California does not currently assess a sample of students to measure school readiness. | Minnesota assesses a random sample of schools each year based on the previous year's demographic data, rather than assessing all schools. |
| Establish stakeholder committee on school readiness | California has not convened a statewide committee on school readiness. It did develop The California Comprehensive Early Learning Plan in 2013. Additionally, Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon (D-Lakewood) committed to establish a Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Care and Education to improve services for children up to 3 years old, and to develop options for establishing Universal Pre-K for all 4-year-olds. | Virginia's School Readiness Committee addressed the development and alignment of an effective professional development and credentialing system for the early childhood education workforce; consideration of articulation agreements between associate and baccalaureate degree programs; review of teacher licensure and education programs, including programs offered at comprehensive community colleges; alignment of existing professional development funding streams; and development of innovative approaches to improving the workforce development system. |

## TRENDS

Throughout the various strategies listed in this compendium, three distinct trends emerged.

### Pilot Programs

Various states have enacted pilot programs to test early learning system components. Pilot programs, rather than full statewide rollouts, are enacted for many reasons. States often want to test programs before they are fully implemented, and pilot programs are also far easier to get included in legislative language with regard to budget and appropriations. Pilot programs generally limit participation to a small subset of the population by targeting a specific geographic region or including specific participation requirements. For example, Indiana established a pilot program for providers who score at least three on the state's QRIS to: a) serve four and five year olds below 127% of FPL; b) administer a kindergarten readiness assessment; c) include family engagement as a component of quality; and d) participate in a longitudinal study to measure child outcomes. Another example is Colorado, which enacted a pilot program to study whether changes to family income eligibility could mitigate the cliff effect, and recently removed restrictions so that more counties can participate in the program.

### Backend Strategies

Many states have also used backend strategies that accomplish a goal while changing the method in which it is accomplished. An example of this is Nebraska. Rather than raising family income eligibility, Nebraska instead enacted legislation that removes educational assets and 10% of a family's income after one year on the program when calculating family income eligibility. This allows for more families to take advantage of child care subsidies and was likely easier to pass for political and/or budget reasons. Another example is Louisiana. Rather than raising educator salaries, Louisiana enacted tax credits for early care educators. The outcome of early childhood educators earning more money remained the same, but it was accomplished in a different way.

### Repurpose Examples from Other States

The final trend seen across states as they build early learning systems is utilization of successful policies and legislation from other states. One example of this occurred in Nebraska. Their School Readiness Tax Credits, enacted in 2016, are based on Louisiana's successful implementation of its own School Readiness Tax Credits in 2008. Louisiana has five School Readiness Tax Credits. Nebraska has implemented two, which are nearly identical to Louisiana's. In fact, one of the arguments for Nebraska's tax credits was that Louisiana's had been so successful.

Another example is Virginia's exploration of a tiered reimbursement structure. Specifically, Virginia's Senate passed legislation directing the Department of Social Services to study a tiered reimbursement subsidy system, including examining "other states that utilize a tiered reimbursement subsidy program, including implementation strategies and results." The resulting recommendations for a tiered reimbursement system in Virginia incorporate these state examples.

## CONCLUSION

A diverse array of legislative options for building high quality early learning systems for licensed birth through age five care exists across the country. As the First 5 Association Policy Committee prioritizes options, these policy examples from other states can serve as a guide for discussion and consideration.

**Sources**
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