

# Power of Preschool in Santa Clara County

Making the First  
Five Years Count



June 2011

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## Making the First Five Years Count

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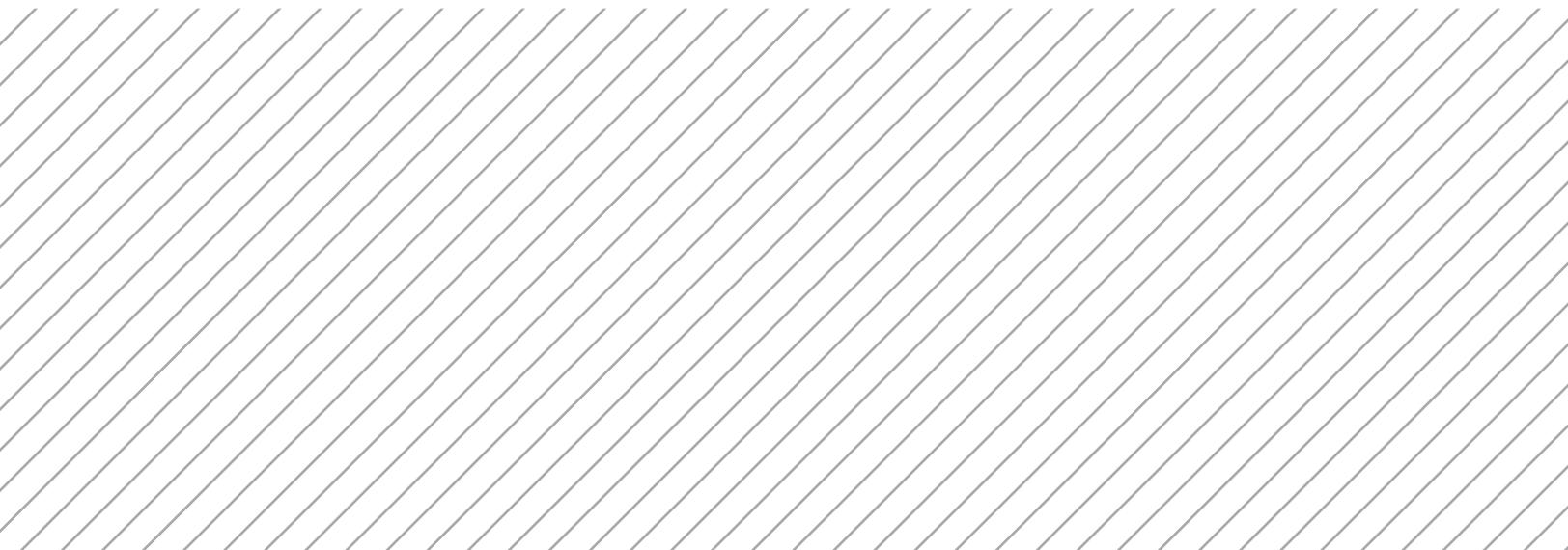
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June 2011

Dear Readers,

At the WestEd E3 Institute, we know that early education leaders, administrators, and teachers always look for ways to become more effective, and that is why we created Power of Preschool (PoP) for Santa Clara County. PoP has been in place since 2006 with funding from FIRST 5 Santa Clara County and First 5 California.

The primary goal of the Santa Clara County PoP program is to develop young children's personal, social, and physical competence so they are ready to be effective learners by the time they reach kindergarten. Secondary goals are to develop unique collaborations to sustain funding and to provide comprehensive services to families who otherwise would most likely go without needed services.

PoP has achieved its goals through innovative approaches to service delivery and by integrating its services with the FIRST 5 Santa Clara County System of Care. The program provides the Santa Clara County community with high-quality early education; early identification and attentive response to special needs; partnerships with parents of children who are at risk for school failure; and partnerships with children and family services. We are proud that thousands of children and families have been served effectively, and that teachers have benefited as well.

PoP and our Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards (CARES) program share an emphasis on quality learning environments for children. With the help of these two programs, a cohort of teachers has graduated from college with a Bachelor of Arts specializing in early childhood education. Many others have completed community college degrees specializing in early childhood while balancing the multiple demands of family, job, and community. Some teachers are even navigating through a master's program, attending school in the evenings, on weekends, and over summers.

Although PoP has been able to provide high-quality services to 2,733 children during 2006–10 throughout the high-risk neighborhoods of Santa Clara County, many children are unable to gain access to PoP's offerings because of funding or other constraints. In a California statewide study by RAND, less than 50 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds in disadvantaged families were in center-based preschool programs, and only 15 percent of high-risk children and families were being served by high-quality programs (Karoly et al., 2008).

As one way to continue expanding and improving services for the children and families most in need, we hope this report will increase awareness of PoP as an innovative demonstration. This report celebrates the important achievements we have made in the first five years of PoP. But there is a great deal more to be accomplished. We hope you will join us in these important endeavors.

Sincerely,



Yolanda Garcia  
Director, E3 Institute



Sandy Baba  
Professional Development Manager

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# Introduction

To improve the life paths of Santa Clara County's young children in underserved neighborhoods, a team of professionals from early education, mental health, public health, dependency court, and special needs and social service delivery systems came together in 2002 with representatives from key county policymaking offices to begin the process that led to the county's Power of Preschool initiative. Funded by FIRST 5 Santa Clara County and First 5 California, and with wide representation from the community and careful use of research, this group has developed a high-quality and culturally/linguistically responsive preschool model that prepares children for kindergarten and later success in school and life.

Initially, the project was named Preschool for All. In 2006, the name changed to Power of Preschool (PoP). The WestEd E3 Institute – Excellence in Early Child Education (E3) – led the planning and oversees implementation of PoP in Santa Clara County.

The program seeks to expand high-quality, free, voluntary early education and care in the county's most underserved communities where children and families live with exposure to multiple risk factors. In this report, we describe the Santa Clara County PoP and detail some of the many ways it has proven to be effective in its first years.

We are proud to share what PoP has accomplished to meet the needs of many children and families. In the following sections of this report, we touch on the early history of PoP, describe its development and structure, and explain how PoP has met the needs of the children served thus far while also helping teachers progress along their educational and professional paths.

## Santa Clara County PoP Cumulative Statistics, 2006–10

Children Served	2,733
Master Teachers and Assistant Teachers	141
Teaching Artists	16
Teaching Scientists	9
Program Administrators	18

# Context and Origins

Santa Clara County is a place of contradictions. Home to Silicon Valley – legendary for successful enterprises in science and technology – the county has large numbers of highly educated young adults who thrive financially, some generating million-dollar incomes before they turn 30 years old. Scattered throughout the county are the hallmarks of this wealth, including well-endowed private universities, beautiful homes, fine restaurants, and abundant cultural opportunities.

But in many Santa Clara County neighborhoods, a far different reality persists. Within these neighborhoods are preschool children exposed to multiple risk factors that include exposure to drugs or toxins before birth, low birth weight, extreme family poverty, poor nutrition, parental depression or substance abuse, domestic violence, family unemployment, and high-crime areas.

Before Power of Preschool began, these neighborhoods had a low supply of licensed early childhood programs relative to the density of preschool-age children, and the quality of early education services for children and families in these underserved areas was inconsistent. PoP sought to turn around these conditions by increasing services and bringing up the level of quality in targeted areas throughout the county.

Through a collaborative, research-based model that we describe further in this report, PoP has increased the quality of early childhood education in the county and demonstrated the importance of certain practices – namely coaching, monitoring, professional development, and treating diverse sectors consistently – in order to ensure quality services for young children and their families.

## Identifying the Highest-Need Areas

To target the highest-need zip codes in Santa Clara County, maps were created from data on risk variables and data from child abuse center hotline calls. The Santa Clara County Department of Social Services assisted in conducting a differential response analysis of the hotline calls.

To create geographic representations of risk variables, the following data were identified and analyzed for each of the county's zip codes:

- » the number of children 0–5 years of age
- » the supply of licensed early childhood programs
- » cumulative developmental risk factors for children and families

Countywide maps were produced showing these three characteristics for each zip code.

The developmental risk factors that were measured, analyzed, and depicted geographically included rates of:

- » mothers who did not graduate from high school
- » teen pregnancies
- » births with low birth weight
- » births with late entry into prenatal care
- » births with Medi-Cal as the primary source of payment
- » substantiated abuse incidents
- » domestic violence reports involving children

(Figure 1 on page 4 shows one of the maps produced from this analysis.)

# Development of Power of Preschool

A number of different strands were woven together in the creation of the Santa Clara County Power of Preschool program. PoP builds on and integrates with existing public and private early care and education programs and partnerships in the county. It also builds on California preschool history and public policy, developmental and behavioral research, the support and involvement of First 5 California and FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, and the deep-rooted community engagement of the WestEd E3 Institute and its partners.

A 15-month-long collaborative civic engagement planning process that included 150 leaders throughout the county contributed to the creation of the Santa Clara County PoP program. The participants in this process included well-informed representatives from early education, business, community and four-year colleges, foundations, school districts, research organizations, community-based agencies that included social services, and other nonprofit organizations. Working collaboratively, these leaders developed the vision, strategic mission, and business plan framework, and planned for civic engagement throughout Santa Clara County.

The PoP planning team developed a model that focuses on providing for a child's physical safety and growth, and on social-emotional and brain development. The planning group also focused on children at highest risk within the county. A research and development team convened leaders from FIRST 5 Santa Clara County; early childhood educators; social workers; judges; service

providers; and policymakers from the Santa Clara Office of the County Executive and Departments of Mental Health, Social Services, and Family and Children's Services. This group studied best practices and recommended an appropriate service delivery model for children and families who were experiencing multiple risk factors. (See sidebar on "Identifying the Highest-Need Areas" on page 2.)

The PoP model is also grounded in California preschool history and public policy. PoP was founded with the intention of building upon the goals of California's 2002 Master Plan for Education, such as supporting and assisting children to become "personally, socially, and physically competent, effective learners, and ready to transition into kindergarten and the elementary grades." One of the key goals of the state's Master Plan for Education is to improve school readiness by providing equal access to high-quality voluntary preschool for all children 3–4 years of age.

# Research Base

Research shows that children from birth through 5 years of age are at a critical stage in their development and that preschool can make a positive contribution. The Power of Preschool program was created to assist children at this stage in becoming personally, socially, and physically competent, effective learners who are ready to transition into kindergarten. The PoP service model addresses all domains of a child's life. Children do not develop in isolation, but develop within a set of social systems that are interconnected and dynamic. The PoP program takes into account that a child must be understood within the context of the family environment, and that the family must be understood within the context of its community and larger society.

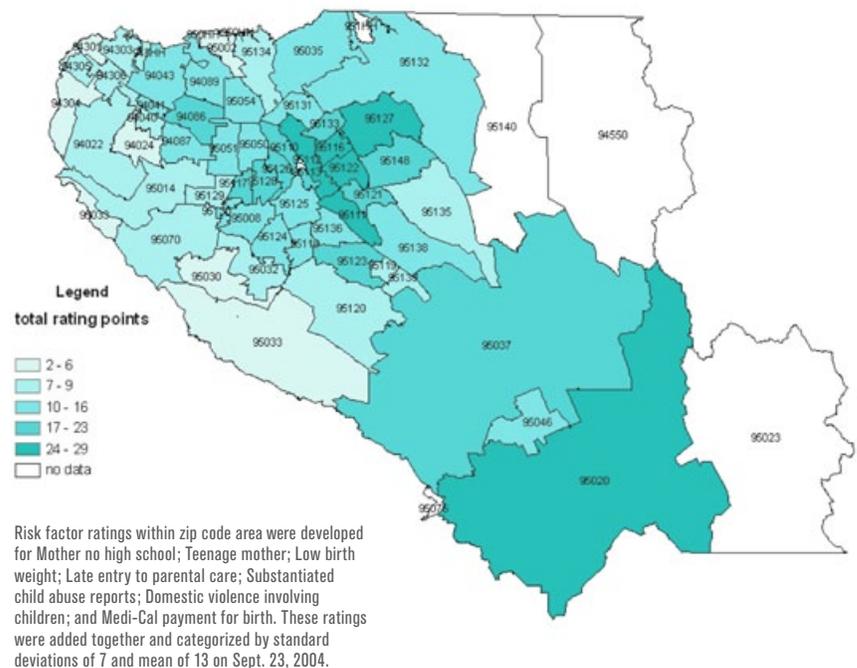
PoP is based on the ecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2000; Garbarino & Ganzel, 2000), which pays attention to the impact of interactions between a child and the immediate environments on the child's development. These environments include a child's family, early care and education program, health care setting, and other community contexts, such as neighborhoods and playgrounds.

PoP is also rooted in developmental and behavioral research related to adversity, protective factors, and resilience (Rutter, 2000), as well as research on what works best for children and families at highest risk for negative outcomes, such as school failure.

The research and design team that helped develop PoP produced a compendium of relevant research that totaled more than 1,000 pages of key findings, summaries of formal case studies, and national and international program evaluation reports. Some of the points that emerged from this research base include the following:

- » Children make significant gains in development when they go to preschool (Barnett, Lamy, & Jung, 2005; Xiang & Schweinhart, 2002).
- » Critical neural growth in the brain occurs between birth and 5 years of age (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000). During these early years, the building blocks of

Figure 1. Map of Health Risk Factors by Zip Code



- » Early education is a long-term investment with positive economic returns for high-risk populations (Karoly & Bigelow, 2005).

Different streams of knowledge culled from this research shaped the planning. Building on this research, PoP leaders developed several key principles that have shaped the program:

- » Serving the most vulnerable children, including children with special needs and English language learners
- » Building family and community
- » Including early educators from diverse backgrounds

- » Ensuring family-based, culturally competent, and language-appropriate services

Consistent with these principles, PoP seeks to make high-quality learning opportunities accessible and available for all children from birth through 5 years of age in high-need areas throughout Santa Clara County. By doing so, PoP supports services to prepare the whole child for school, thereby helping to close the achievement gap.

# Power of Preschool Components

The Power of Preschool program can be challenging to define or summarize because it does not consist of a single service or activity; rather, PoP is a coordinated effort to bring the full set of early education services in the county under one umbrella and mobilize these services to provide a consistent, high level of quality for children and families in the most high-need neighborhoods.

The PoP program is working to accomplish its goals in two main ways:

1. PoP directly supports a set of preschools and infant/toddler sites in targeted areas of the county to demonstrate how to achieve high-quality early education for the most high-need children and families.
2. PoP has built extensive partnerships and networks in the county to coordinate services and raise the level of quality for all.

## PoP sites

PoP directly supports 53 preschools and infant/toddler classes (located in 22 sites across the county) by providing funding and a variety of coordinated services. PoP is not limited to any single type of early education program. Rather,

the PoP program has been a leader in innovative approaches by incorporating a variety of programs, which include General Child Care, Head Start, State Preschool, nonprofit programs, small businesses, and large family child care programs. Thus, PoP sites represent the full range of program types in the county.

**General Child Care** and Development programs are subsidized through state contract funding and must adhere to the state's General Child Care and Development Terms and Regulations. These programs are commonly operated through nonprofit or government-run child development centers and serve children from birth through 5 years of age. Such programs are regulated by both Title 22 and Title 5 laws.

**Head Start** programs are subsidized through federal funding and must adhere to Head Start funding terms and regulations. These programs are commonly operated through nonprofit or government-run child development centers. Head Start programs serve children 3–5 years of age and are regulated by Title 22 laws.

**California State Preschool** programs are subsidized through state contract funding and must adhere to the state’s terms and regulations. These programs are commonly operated through nonprofit or government-run child development centers and school districts. California State Preschool programs serve children from birth through 5 years of age and are regulated by both Title 22 and Title 5 laws.

**Large Family Child Care** programs are funded through parent fees and, if applicable, through participation in family child care networks that manage state-funded Alternative Payment Programs. These programs are primarily operated as private home businesses. Large Family Child Care programs may serve children from infancy through school age and are regulated by Title 22 laws.

**Private** child development centers are funded through parent fees. Some private child development centers hold and are funded through state child care contracts, such as State Preschool and General Child Care contracts. These programs are considered private or nonprofit businesses. Private child development centers may serve children from infancy through school age and are regulated by Title 22 and, if applicable, by Title 5 laws.

PoP sites have multiple funding streams in order to contribute to their sustainability. PoP encourages efficient use of existing funds, braided into a funding base that requires careful and skillful administration. Some of the 53 current PoP classes are new preschool or early education spaces, funded entirely by sources that PoP coordinates. These spaces do not receive federal or state subsidies for their sessions. Other PoP preschools and early education programs are called “enhanced” sites – these receive public and/or private funds from sources such as state and federal programs and parent fees, and these

Figure 2. Percentage of Children Served by Program Type

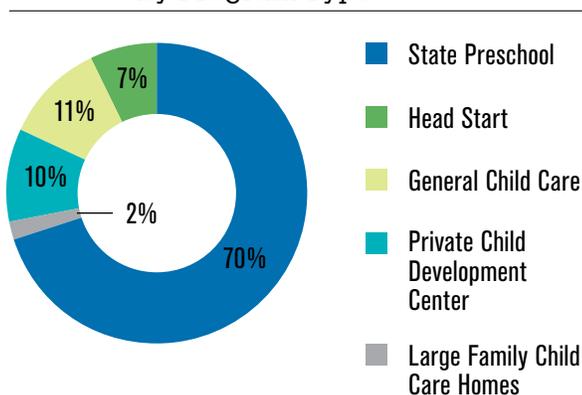
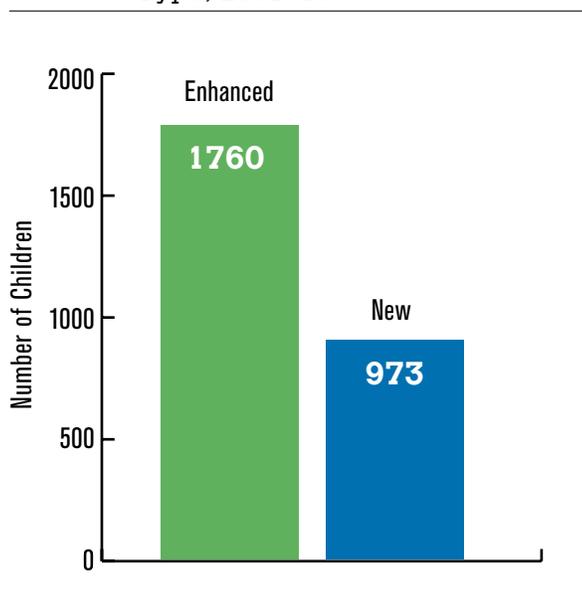


Figure 3. Child Enrollment by Funding Type, 2007–10

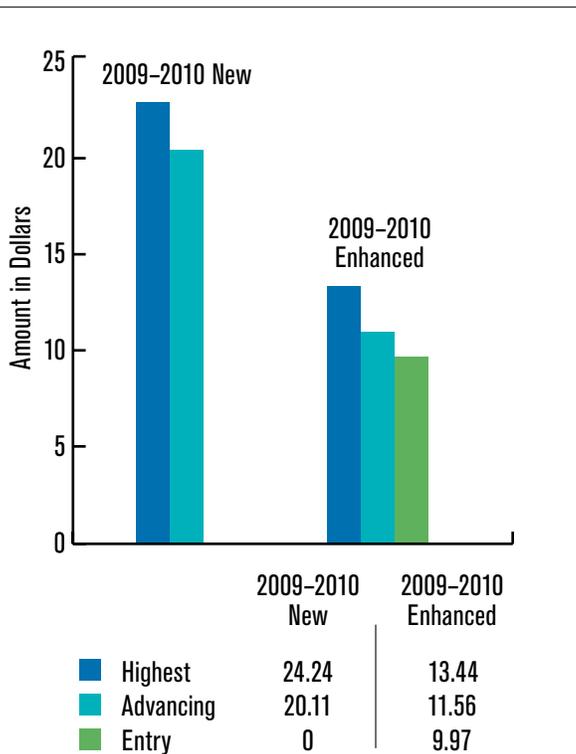


funds are “enhanced” by PoP funding and support. New PoP programs receive more funding from PoP than enhanced programs because enhanced programs have additional sources of funding to support the children in their classrooms.

PoP sites receive different levels of PoP funding based on the quality level of the site, which is determined by the level of educational attainment of its teachers. Sites are rewarded financially for having teachers with higher levels of education. Each site receives tiered per-child/per-day financial rewards based on teacher educational attainment

levels, with the three levels labeled as “Entry,” “Advancing,” and “Highest.” This reimbursement approach underscores the relevance of research about the positive relationship between teachers’ professional development and child growth and development. Research shows that early childhood education professionals with higher educational attainment levels provide care that results in improved long-term intellectual, emotional, and physical health in children (Sylva et al., 2004). Figure 4 shows the average reimbursement rates, in number of dollars per day, for new and enhanced PoP programs for 2009–10.

Figure 4. Average Daily Reimbursement Rates for PoP Sites



## PoP coordinated services

PoP is not simply an early childhood education program, as it provides additional services and resources to children and educators through the FIRST 5 Santa Clara County System of Care. Following an ecological approach, the PoP model provides quality early education within the context of children’s families, neighborhoods, communities, and systems. The additional services and resources that PoP provides include early screening, assessment, and intervention in inclusive settings; social-emotional, physical, and cognitive support for children and families; and numerous agency partnerships that integrate and increase access to high-quality resources.

**KidConnections:** As one critical component in the FIRST 5 Santa Clara County System of Care, PoP works with KidConnections, a collaborative of community agencies that ensure consistent and coordinated screening, assessment, referral, and treatment for children from birth through 5 years of age. All children enrolled in PoP sites receive developmental screening assessments using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire<sup>1</sup> to ensure early detection of developmental delays. Families and children identified as being in need of intervention are supported by community services provided by partners of FIRST 5 Santa Clara County.

**Coaching and Modeling:** The main quality assurance component of the program and one of the most important ways that PoP works to improve the quality of early education in the county is by providing innovative and individualized coaching and modeling for teachers in all PoP classrooms. This component is called the Quality Enhancement Support Team (QuEST), and it includes three parts:

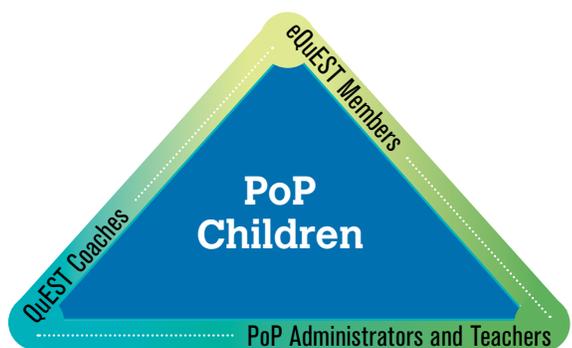
1. **QuEST coaches** – Early education professionals with extensive experience and expertise in developing, implementing, and managing diverse early education programs.
2. **eQuEST members** – Staff members from the WestEd E3 Institute who have expertise in early education, program development,

<sup>1</sup> The questionnaire is an individual child screening and assessment instrument used to inform practice, identify need for early intervention referrals, and advocate for services.

and administrative systems and who design and implement best practice models at the local, regional, state, and national levels.

3. **Site administrators** – Administrators at each PoP site who oversee the delivery of high-quality early education services to the children and families in PoP programs.

Figure 5. PoP Quality Enhancement:  
The QuEST Triad



Each PoP preschool and infant/toddler program is assigned a QuEST coach, and each coach is assigned an eQuEST member, with an effort to match the needs observed in each site with the expertise of the team members assigned to support that site. The QuEST coaches, eQuEST members, and site administrators work together to identify and address immediate concerns at each PoP site, and work together to achieve and maintain program quality by developing, implementing, and monitoring a Quality Enhancement Plan for each PoP site.

QuEST team members use a comprehensive approach to build each Quality Enhancement Plan. Rather than relying on only one or two assessment scales, the QuEST team applies diverse and appropriate research-based tools to document both process and structural changes and to devise the most meaningful and purposeful enhancements for each site. The categories used for monitoring and improving quality are customized to each PoP site's needs. Structural quality features include elements that provide opportunities for indirect, interactive experiences. They usually include

teacher-child ratios, group size, continuity of care, primary caregiving, and program policies. Process quality features addressed in sites' plans refer to children's opportunities for direct, interactive, tactile experiences with people and materials. These include relationship-based interactions with adults primarily responsible for learning and care, access to developmentally appropriate materials, and the ability to move freely in the environment for appropriate stimulation.

One scale used by the QuEST team is the Harms/Clifford Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised for center-based and home-based preschool and infant-toddler programs. This widely used rating scale is for measuring structural quality. QuEST coaches use this tool to provide feedback for teachers and to develop plans to improve the quality of what they deliver to children in the classroom.

The QuEST Quality Enhancement Plan also provides opportunities to document and enhance areas that are not assessed by environment rating scales, such as support for home language development, program involvement in the community, and overall agency needs in business administration.

The QuEST team uses the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), a widely used rating scale for measuring teachers' strengths and weaknesses and the quality of interactions between teachers and preschool students. It focuses on the domains of emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support.

In order to provide high-quality, research-based technical assistance components for the infant-toddler program, QuEST uses the WestEd Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) Program Assessment Rating Scale. This observation tool is used to rate programs on practices such as those related to teachers' interactions with infants and infants' interactions with the learning environment.

To support program directors to become more effective administrators, QuEST uses the Program Administration Scale and the Business Administration Scale to identify and enhance administration effectiveness and productivity. Domains in these scales include work environment,

fiscal management, risk management, marketing, and public relations.

The initial Quality Enhancement Plans developed for each PoP site focused on the highest-priority items identified by the QuEST triad of coaches, eQuEST members, and site administrators. Priority items tended to include health and safety, critical indoor and outdoor environmental issues, and teacher interactions.

To respond to the diversity of children and families participating in PoP preschools and infant/toddler programs, the Quality Enhancement Plan is tailored to each preschool or care center and is based on observations and discussions with PoP administrators and teachers. In most cases, administrators and teachers at each PoP site complete self-assessments on their classrooms with technical assistance from other members of the QuEST triad. Then, eQuEST and QuEST coaches use these self-assessments, along with QuEST coaches' assessments, to develop Quality Enhancement Plans in partnership with the site administrators and teachers.

QuEST coaches use the results from these assessments to encourage needed improvements. Coaching becomes an educational interaction at each site, with the QuEST coaches working with the teaching staff to add a wider variety of materials to children's environments indoors and outdoors and to extend children's play experiences. Coaches also observe and share information on how teachers can support parent interaction. Coaches for each site record detailed notes on their observations, which form the basis for many interactive discussions between coaches and the teachers and administrators at each site.

The QuEST process also includes raising the educational levels of PoP teachers and administrators by requiring all PoP early educators to create a Professional Development and Education Plan with a designated college representative.

***Professional Development and Education Plan:***

This online system was developed by WestEd Interactive in collaboration with the WestEd E3 Institute as part of the data management system

of the Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards (CARES) program in Santa Clara County. The Professional Development and Education Plan provides data on early educators' California Child Development Permit levels and educational attainment, and it informs future professional development initiatives. The online tool is used to help early educators work with college representatives to plan their educational trajectories. Designed in collaboration with six community colleges and two universities, the system is continuously refined based on feedback from college representatives and faculty members. The online Professional Development and Education Plan is linked to each PoP participant's teacher profile, and teacher educational qualifications are tracked by classroom session to determine program quality level and reimbursement rates. Using this tool is one way the PoP program assists classroom teachers and assistant teachers to continue their education, thus improving the quality of teaching experiences for the young children in their care, while providing ongoing evaluation for program improvement.

***Core Data System:*** Another critical component of PoP is the Core Data System, which collects child and family demographic, enrollment, and attendance data to track the use of PoP preschool sites across geographic, ethnic, and language groups. This online integrated system allows PoP to collect, organize, and securely and confidentially store and share data. It contains a wide variety of information, including teacher demographics; child and family data and demographics; agency, center, and classroom data, including funding streams and program details; child assessment data from the Ages and Stages Questionnaire and from the Desired Results Developmental Profile<sup>2</sup>; and quality improvement goals, updates, and progress. These capabilities allow the WestEd E3 Institute to streamline and automate program reporting and invoicing; monitor data and trends, including enrollment and sites' progress on their Quality Enhancement Plans, in real time for formative and outcome evaluation; and transfer data and documents confidentially and securely to and from program partners.

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<sup>2</sup> The Desired Results Developmental Profile provides child development data to inform teaching and to help determine children's readiness for kindergarten. The PoP program began to use Desired Results Developmental Profile-Preschool (2010) in the 2009–10 school year. See <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ci/desiredresults.asp> for more information.

**SIMPLE:** The WestEd E3 Institute, in partnership with WestEd Interactive, developed the System for Information Management of Preschool Logistics and Enrollment (SIMPLE). SIMPLE is an extension of the PoP Core Data System and is a customized PoP and California State Preschool data management system. Developed for the largest school district in Santa Clara County (San Jose Unified), SIMPLE handles child enrollment; attendance; Desired Results Developmental Profile, Ages and Stages Questionnaire, and Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale data; and teacher assignments and qualifications. The system allows day-to-day management of data using a teacher interface to track child Desired Results Developmental Profile data and includes analysis and management reporting features.

**PoP Tracker:** The PoP Tracker is an instrument designed to assist with the PoP QuEST model, and to meet the needs of individual classrooms as identified through observation, self-assessments, and discussion. The system enables web-based real-time access to the goals and strategies to improve quality in each classroom, including data on environment, home language development, teacher-child interaction, interactions with families, program involvement in the community, and agency infrastructure and administrative capacity. Information stored in the system is cumulative, enabling the WestEd E3 Institute staff, teaching teams, and coaches to assess the ongoing accumulated quality enhancement knowledge.

## Other PoP program elements

**Teacher Institutes:** Santa Clara County PoP Teacher Institutes used a strategic approach to address immediate professional development needs of PoP sites' teaching staff and administrators during the first two years of PoP implementation. In collaboration with the Santa Clara County Office of Education, one-week, all-day trainings were offered to PoP teaching staff and administrators for two consecutive years. Instructors for these trainings included leaders in the fields of inclusion, special needs, cultural and linguistic diversity, parent

engagement, challenging behaviors, resilience, and English language learning.

**PoP Leadership Circle:** This group is composed of PoP site administrators, PoP teaching staff, QuEST coaches, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County staff, and WestEd E3 Institute PoP staff. PoP Leadership Circle meetings are convened quarterly with the following four main goals:

1. Maintain open and ongoing communication among PoP program staff and WestEd E3 Institute staff.
2. Establish and inform PoP program policy and implementation.
3. Promote child and family policy advocacy and outreach.
4. Collectively and strategically address PoP program challenges, efforts, and planning.

The PoP Leadership Circle meetings are held at the WestEd E3 Institute office and are led by institute staff, with an agenda that informs members on child and family advocacy efforts, provides the status on PoP contracts and requirements, and delineates the PoP program's annual components.

**Diversity Awareness:** Children and families served through the PoP program come from diverse backgrounds. Each member of the WestEd E3 Institute staff brings different and comprehensive expertise to the PoP program to ensure the highest quality of service delivery. Members of the institute staff are culturally diverse, fluent in several languages, and knowledgeable of cultural practices of families and communities served. The WestEd E3 Institute deploys its QuEST team to support diversity professional development for PoP teaching staff using resources such as the California Department of Education, Child Development Division's *Preschool English Learners: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy, and Learning*. The WestEd E3 Institute staff stays current on national research and professional development related to cultural competence readiness preparation.

## Family Support and Community Engagement

At St. Elizabeth's Day Home, teachers have met regularly with parents and asked them to bring an object from home that illustrates the family's culture. Photos of each child's family have been posted at the children's eye level. Teachers communicated with parents about the child's progress, based on the child's Desired Results Developmental Profile, and made suggestions for things to do at home. Together, the teachers, families, children, and a visual artist with classroom experience put together a display of the children's art for the Children's Discovery Museum – where the whole community saw what the children were capable of when their development was encouraged and supported. Children received certificates for their work and a celebration was held with families and the community.

***BANDTEC Diversity Awareness Forum:*** The Bay Area Network for Diversity Trainers in Early Education (BANDTEC)<sup>3</sup> facilitated all-day diversity awareness professional development sessions for all PoP teachers, administrators, and coaches. BANDTEC provided culturally competent diversity professional development and technical assistance to the PoP teaching staff through hands-on workshops and written materials. Through these professional development sessions, participants gained a deeper understanding of how culture influences behavior, relationships with others such as teaching teams and other staff, and interactions with children and families. This diversity awareness project has resulted in the identification and development of diversity enhancement plans for PoP classrooms.

***Bridge Program for Infants and Toddlers:*** FIRST 5 Santa Clara County was recently awarded a PoP Bridge Grant to improve services for infants and toddlers from birth through 3 years of age, with the WestEd E3 Institute as the lead agency for this new initiative. The institute successfully recruited existing and new PoP partners to provide a total of 64 enhanced infant/toddler spaces for the 2010–11

fiscal year. In order to provide high-quality and research-based technical assistance components for the 0–3 early childhood educators participating in this PoP Bridge Program, the WestEd E3 Institute worked closely with the WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies' Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) and the evaluation team – the developers of the PITC Program Assessment Rating Scale – to offer professional development for infant and toddler service practitioners.

***Family Engagement Through Abriendo Puertas:*** The WestEd E3 Institute successfully recruited Families and Schools, a Los Angeles–based organization, to provide family empowerment training to FIRST 5 Santa Clara County's community workers and PoP staff on the Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors curriculum. Abriendo Puertas is the nation's first evidence-based parent leadership training program for Latino parents with children 0–5 years of age. This curriculum, delivered in ten interactive sessions, draws on the real-life experiences and cultural strengths of its participants. Objectives are to increase the following qualities in parents:

- » Confidence about parenting skills
- » Knowledge about available health services
- » Social support and social connections in the community
- » Desire for community involvement
- » Empowerment in the community and with their child's education

Results from quantitative and qualitative analyses collected through pre- and post-surveys, questionnaires, field notes, and focus groups at the beginning and end of the program show that Abriendo Puertas participants display significant increases in their confidence as parents, knowledge and comfort with available services, social support, connection to the community, and civic engagement. As a result of the engagement with Abriendo Puertas, community workers and teachers learned to deliver the model and are deployed to work with families in the community.

<sup>3</sup> BANDTEC was created in 1994 by early childhood education leaders, trainers, and practitioners to address some of the key issues in diversity training in the Bay Area. Since its founding, the group has evolved into an active membership organization representing community colleges, resource and referral agencies, research organizations, nonprofit training institutions, county agencies, foundations, and child development programs.

**Arts Integration:** Research has shown that a curriculum inclusive of the arts fosters child development, promotes language development, and increases social and emotional development. At the Santa Clara County PoP sites, art activities are used to promote and enhance children's learning in literacy (e.g., writing and illustrating stories, labeling pictures), mathematics sequences, patterns, and other cognitive and social areas. Art, dramatic play, and music activities are implemented daily. These experiences allow children to stretch their imaginations, exercise muscles, contribute to formation of spatial and temporal concepts, and build respect for the uniqueness and ideas of others.

In partnership with community arts organizations, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County and the WestEd E3 Institute have integrated the arts into PoP classrooms through hands-on activities that provide age-appropriate, in-depth explorations of art, appealing to children's creativity and curiosity. Artists with professional experience in visual arts, storytelling, music, and dance provide support to teaching staff, families, and children in arts activities. As a result of collaborating with artists in their classrooms, PoP teachers have learned concepts and activities that they have incorporated into their daily curricula.

In the last five years, with the support of FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, a community-based, family-focused program has been developed with Arts Council Silicon Valley. This program has engaged many arts organizations that did not previously have experience or expertise in serving young children, and it has challenged them to develop strategies appropriate for families with young children. The program has involved the Children's Discovery Museum; the Triton Museum; a dance company targeting families with children with autism; ethnic dance companies focusing on Vietnamese, African, Mexican, and Filipino communities; and Wolf Trap, a national arts organization. The program also sponsored special family activities open to the general community. In addition, professional development activities were designed in conjunction with performing artists and early educators to embed

creativity in all aspects of the curriculum and daily experiences for children while engaging families in the arts as well.

PoP also selected and implemented a literacy-based curriculum called Arts Alive! through which parents participated with their children in a summer transition program to reinforce the skills and the joy of learning from preschool into kindergarten.

These experiences have been implemented in the PoP-supported centers and homes. To support the ongoing integration of these experiences into PoP classrooms, PoP developed a process for teachers to reflect on the arts workshops, plan how to extend the materials into their curriculum, and make connections with required tools, such as the Desired Results Developmental Profile and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised.

**Science Integration:** PoP engages a team of teaching scientists to enrich learning by bringing into the classroom activities that engage children in discovery and exploration of the natural world. In partnership with Schmal Science, teaching scientists work with early educators to plan, enhance, and deliver curriculum that embeds scientific inquiry and concepts into children's daily experiences. To enhance their effectiveness in working with early educators, these scientists have received professional development in early education, covering topics such as the importance of assessment in the planning process.

All science workshops held at PoP sites are provided with developmentally appropriate children's books that match each of the science workshop themes and provide vocabulary building and encouragement with intentional conversations. The WestEd E3 Institute has used data from these workshops to plan and enhance future programmatic delivery. During 2009–10, an early literacy component and a Spanish language workshop were introduced in the science workshops.

**Children with Special Needs/Inclusion:** Up to approximately 15 percent of children enrolled in PoP sites have been identified as having special needs. To promote positive outcomes for children

with disabilities and other special needs, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County provides the Screening To Assessment, Referral, and Treatment Services (STARTS) system for children from birth through 5 years of age. PoP partners, including FIRST 5 Santa Clara County's KidConnections collaborative, administer developmental screening assessments for infants, toddlers, and preschool children to ensure early detection of developmental delays. FIRST 5 Santa Clara County partners support families of the children identified in need of intervention.

PoP classroom staff members support children with an existing Individualized Education Plan (IEP) through incorporating the child's IEP goals into the classroom lesson plans and through regular communication and updates with the child's parents and IEP team members. In addition, all PoP children are screened for developmental delays using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. This screening helps to identify children who need further assessment, support, or intervention and may lead to a diagnosis or IEP arrangement.

**Curriculum and Articulation:** Curricula in PoP are guided by standards that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate. Reflective curriculum practices, child observations, and assessments – specifically the Desired Results Developmental Profile and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire – inform the development of curricula. QuEST coaches work with PoP programs one-on-one to identify, adapt, and implement curricula to meet the individual needs of their children and teachers. Coaches work with each teaching team to apply research-based resources to enhance the learning and environment of young children. The WestEd E3 Institute staff and coaches research and secure current resources to broaden access and awareness of best practices for PoP program support. Staff and coaches also address curriculum needs in

their reviews and discussions of PoP monthly and quarterly reports.

The following are some of the resources that coaches use when working with PoP programs on curriculum development:

### **California Preschool Learning Foundations**

The curriculum in each classroom is designed and implemented to promote the goals for children that are outlined in the California Preschool Learning Foundations.

### **Preschool English Learners: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy, and Learning, Resource Guide**

Because the majority of PoP children speak a language other than English at home, classrooms incorporate instructional practices for working with dual-language learners, as outlined in this guide.

### **California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations**

For infant and toddler programs, the PITC model and the California Department of Education publication, *California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations*, are used to demonstrate evidence-based expectations for the way most infants and toddlers make progress in the major domains of social-emotional, language, cognitive, perceptual, and motor development.<sup>4</sup>

### **Quality Benchmark for Cultural Competence Project and Reaching for Answers**

National Association for the Education of Young Children professional development resources related to cultural competence readiness preparation include the Quality Benchmark for Cultural Competence Project (June 2009) and Reaching for Answers, a BANDTEC training model. These resources are often applied when diversity and equity principles are needed to enhance curricular development.

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<sup>4</sup> More information on the Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations is available online from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/itfoundations.asp>.

# Power of Preschool Impact

## Reaching those most in need

By targeting the highest-need areas of Santa Clara County, Power of Preschool has ensured that its preschool and infant/toddler sites have served the children and families who can benefit the most from high-quality early education. Studies have found that the biggest “readiness gaps” are shown in children from low-income, minority, and English language learner backgrounds (Cannon & Karoly, 2007).

From 2006 through 2010, all of the PoP classes served a total of 2,733 children, 3–5 years of age. These children have come from diverse family, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. A 2008–09 PoP parent survey asked parents to indicate the primary and secondary guardians for each child, and responses indicated that nearly a third of the 800 children in PoP that year had only one parent as a caregiver. Mothers were listed as the only caregiver for about 30 percent of the children.

The majority, 72 percent, of children served by PoP sites are English language learners (see Figure 6). Of these English language learners, the largest percentage speak Spanish as their primary language. Only 23 percent of the parents of children in PoP during 2007–10 speak English as their primary language.

Many of the teachers in PoP sites speak English as well as one of the non-English languages of the children and families served. All of the master teachers who have taught in PoP sites for a year or more during 2007–10 are fluent in English, and close to one-third of these teachers are also fluent in a language other than English. English is the primary language of just over half the teachers and assistant teachers who have worked in PoP sites for a year or more during 2007–10. Just over 40 percent of these teachers and assistant teachers speak a language other than English as their home language (see Figure 7).

### Expanding Access to Quality Preschool: El Portal Renovation

In 2007–08, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County provided \$200,000 to help fund the renovation of the El Portal Leadership Academy in Gilroy to create a new PoP location to serve up to 100 children, beginning in the 2008–09 school year. Gilroy Unified School District contributed \$238,000 to the renovation.

El Portal had been used as a community school for school-age students and needed significant renovations in order to meet licensing requirements to provide early education. The renovations included creating a new cluster of preschool classrooms and making a centralized area to provide family support services.

FIRST 5 Santa Clara County investments in the past two years in this site have been significant, enabling PoP to increase enrollment, improve the quality of existing services, and bring the Gilroy Unified School District one step closer to universal access for all preschool children.

Preschool children and families served by El Portal are predominantly Hispanic and economically disadvantaged. Most live in the neighborhoods of two elementary schools that are ranked relatively low (decile 3) by California’s Academic Performance Index. Location is critical to planning district pre-kindergarten and family literacy services at school sites where there is the greatest concentration of need.

One unique aspect of PoP in Gilroy is the Full Potential Community spectrum of services that the school district and FIRST 5 Santa Clara County provide for families. The Full Potential Community partnership allows the district to provide three full-time staff members who advocate for families with children from birth through five years old. These family partners work closely with the PoP preschool staff to identify and offer services to families most in need of support.

Figure 6. Primary Languages of Children in PoP Sites, 2007–10

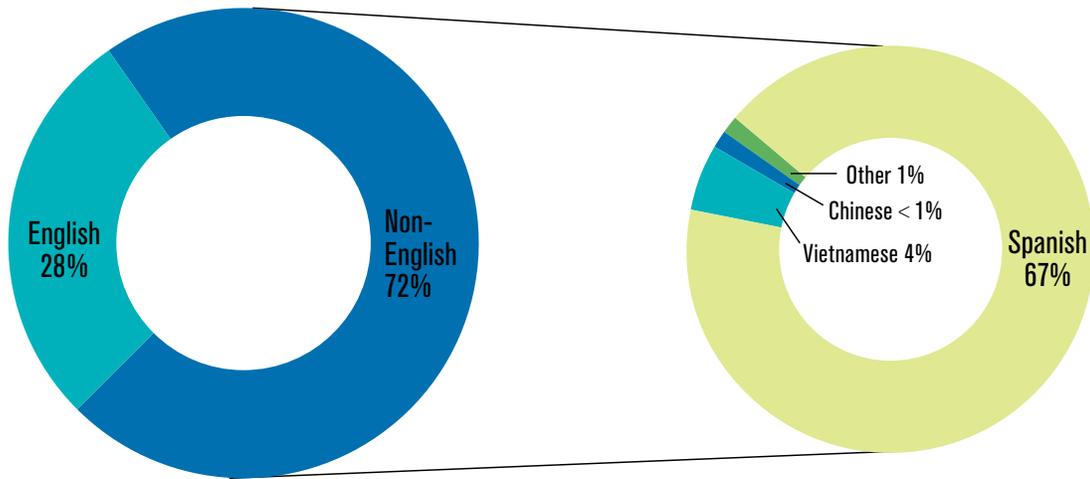
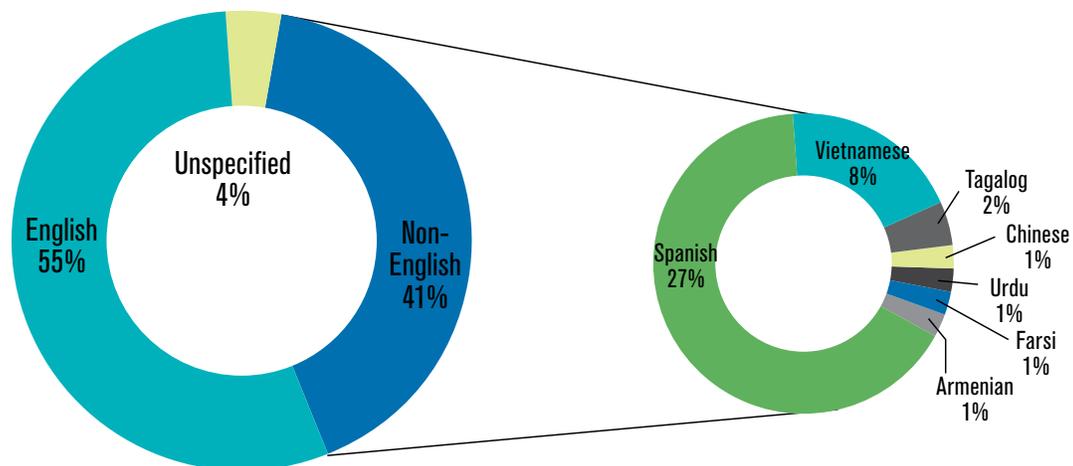


Figure 7. Primary Languages of Teachers in PoP Sites



## Increasing the number and quality of early educators

There has been consistent growth in the number of teachers (including master teachers, assistant teachers, and secondary teaching assistants) who have been recruited into PoP sites. The number of teachers in PoP nearly doubled (from 59 to 104 teachers) from the 2007–08 school year to 2009–10.

More significantly, teacher retention from one year to the next has increased in PoP sites. The

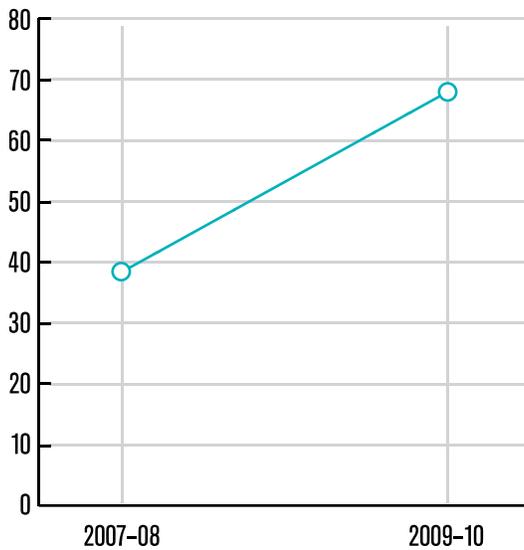
number of teachers who stayed in the program into the next school year grew from 38 in 2007–08 to 68 in 2009–10. Having the same teachers from year to year is particularly important because it contributes to continuity of care for the children, increasing stability and opportunities to build strong relationships between teachers and children.

PoP requires high-quality educational standards of teachers. Nationally, 44 percent of workers in early care and education had only a high school degree or less in 2008 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). In California, only 25 percent of teachers

had a bachelor's degree or higher degree in 2000 (Whitebook et al., 2006). Research shows that child outcomes are closely connected to teacher qualifications – when early childhood educators are well educated, the children they teach are more successful in school and life (Howes & Brown, 2000; Sammons et al., 2004). Early education

professionals who attend college-level courses in early care and education – especially those who earn a bachelor's degree or higher in their field – tend to provide higher-quality services to young children (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001).

Figure 8. Growth in PoP Teacher Retention



For these reasons PoP has made improving the educational attainment of the early childhood educators in Santa Clara County a high priority. Within PoP sites, the program provides incentives to increase teachers' educational attainment – the level of reimbursement for each PoP preschool and infant/care center is directly tied to the level of education achieved by teachers at the site.

All PoP teachers and assistant teachers are required to have taken college-level courses in early care and education. By 2009–10, half of the teachers in PoP sites had a bachelor's degree or higher with a concentration in early care and education. In the 2009–10 school year, almost all of the PoP teachers had either a bachelor's degree or an associate's degree, qualifying them for the Highest or Advancing levels of reimbursement (see

### PoP Teacher Quality Levels

Teachers		Assistant Teachers	
Reimbursement Level	Educational Qualifications	Reimbursement Level	Educational Qualifications
<b>Highest</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» BA degree or higher including 24 Early Childhood Education (ECE) or Child Development (CD) semester units with Core courses</li> <li>» 6 administration units</li> <li>» 2 adult supervision units</li> </ul>	<b>Highest</b>	18 semester units of ECE/CD including Core courses
<b>Advancing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» BA degree or higher including 24 ECE/CD semester units with Core courses</li> <li>» 6 administration units</li> <li>» 2 adult supervision units</li> </ul>	<b>Advancing</b>	12 semester units of ECE/CD including Core courses
<b>Entry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» 24 ECE/CD semester units including Core courses</li> <li>» 16 General Education units</li> <li>» 6 specialization units</li> <li>» 2 adult supervision units</li> </ul>	<b>Entry</b>	6 semester units of ECE or CD courses

Figure 9). Also during that year, more than two-thirds of assistant teachers were at the Highest level of quality for assistant teachers (see Figure 10).

Based on these ratings of teachers, the number of PoP preschool sessions that have been rated at the highest level of quality has increased in both number and proportion, meaning the educational attainment levels for both master and assistant teachers in PoP sites have been rising. In 2007–08, 22 percent of sessions in PoP sites were rated at the highest level of quality, based on teachers' qualifications. In 2008–09, that increased to 35 percent, and by 2009–10, 42 percent of the PoP sessions were rated at the highest level of quality.

Many PoP teachers are continuing to advance along their degree paths despite numerous challenges. To help with this effort, PoP is closely integrated with the Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards (CARES) program in Santa Clara County. Launched in 2002 by FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, CARES promotes the development and retention of a highly qualified early childhood workforce. Santa Clara CARES provides financial stipends and individualized education planning services to encourage and support higher educational attainment for early childhood professionals. Santa Clara CARES has successfully partnered with every community college in Santa Clara County that offers early childhood education and child development units, as well as with two four-year universities. CARES college representatives provide one-on-one college advising and services to CARES participants.

## Helping children grow, while continuously improving services

Teachers' assessments have shown that children in PoP classrooms have made significant developmental progress over the course of each year. PoP teachers use the Desired Results Developmental Profile-Preschool (2010), an observational instrument completed by teachers in all state-funded early care and development

Figure 9. Quality Levels of PoP Teachers, 2009–10

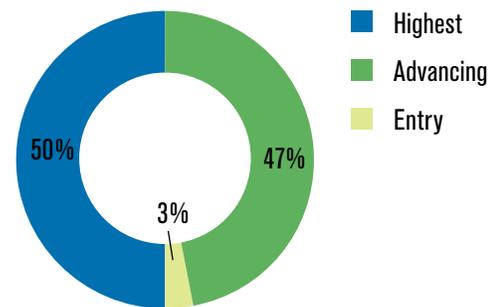
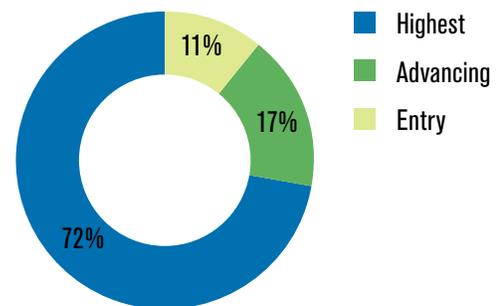


Figure 10. Quality Levels of PoP Assistant Teachers, 2009–10



programs, to track the developmental progress of each child. The profile facilitates teachers' observations, documentation, and reflection on the learning and progress of children over the course of a school year. With this tool, teachers collect information through observations and use this information to focus on and improve teacher interactions, developmentally appropriate practices, and services for children. Teachers can use the assessment results to plan curriculum to support individual children's developmental progress and to guide continuous program improvement. The Desired Results Developmental Profile-Preschool is normally completed twice each year – once in the fall and once in the spring. According to teachers' assessment ratings, children in PoP classrooms have made significant progress from the beginning to the end of the school year in their developmental levels of:

- » Personal and social competence
- » Effective learning
- » Physical and motor competence
- » Safety and health

Another source of information on improving the quality of educational services provided by PoP comes from the formative evaluation provided by the WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies Evaluation Team. Using data from QuEST, the PoP sites' Quality Enhancement Plans, and other child,

teacher, and program data from the program's first and second years, the evaluation team conducted an analysis of trends and patterns in the targeted areas for quality improvement across types of programs and suggested ways to improve the documentation of program quality improvements. The evaluation team also provided agency-level reports showing the domains targeted for improvement. These reports were used to inform continuous program improvement.

# Looking Forward

The Santa Clara County Power of Preschool program continues to provide comprehensive early education, child development, and family services to a significant population of underserved children in Santa Clara County, many of whom are English language learners and have special needs. The program's diverse delivery system serves children and families through a wide range of preschool settings, from state-funded and federally subsidized programs to family child care homes and private community-based centers.

With a First 5 California Bridge Grant, PoP has recently expanded through the addition of services for children from birth through 3 years of age. The Bridge Grant has also resulted in further collaboration between PoP and the WestEd Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC).

PoP and its many partners continue to enhance the early education environment in the county through a variety of initiatives. The WestEd E3 Institute and FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, for example, have contributed extensively to the development of the Santa Clara County Early Learning Master Plan. This document outlines a plan for continuing collaborations across the

early learning and K–12 communities to boost the achievement of the county's youngest students and reduce achievement gaps. FIRST 5 Santa Clara County is also one of the driving forces behind the collaborative activities taking place to develop a new facility – Educare of California at Silicon Valley – where the Educare model will incorporate elements of PoP and CARES.

These and other projects being developed with the help of Santa Clara County's PoP and its partners continue to promise a bright future for the children and families of Santa Clara County.

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# Power of Preschool in Santa Clara County

Making the First  
Five Years Count



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EXCELLENCE IN EARLY EDUCATION

