

Resolution in Support of Quality Preschool and Early Childhood Education

Whereas, educating our next generation is the key to creating the skilled workforce we need to be competitive in the global economy; and

Whereas, about 25% of students drop out of high school and roughly 1 in 4 California adults lack the basic reading skills needed for a typical job; and

Whereas, RAND's 2007-08 study examining the adequacy and efficiency of preschool education in California found that large numbers of elementary school students are not proficient in English and math, with hundreds of thousands of students performing below California State standards; and

Whereas, RAND's study further revealed that half of California's 2nd graders and even more 3rd graders are failing to reach grade-level proficiency in English language arts, with those groups of children who are English language learners or whose parents did not graduate from high school having the highest proportion of students lagging behind; and

Whereas, RAND concludes that this achievement gap first appears as a "readiness gap" among children entering kindergarten and that the groups of children trailing academically in the K-12 years are the same ones that are less ready when they enter school; and

Whereas, RAND's study confirms that children gain numerous cognitive benefits from effective early childhood education, including increased high school graduation rates and higher scores on school readiness measures at kindergarten entry, with even stronger benefits for children from less advantaged backgrounds; and

Whereas, students who have attended quality preschool programs are more likely to make better personal health decisions and be arrested less often than their peers who did not attend; and

Whereas, every day early childhood education (ECE) teachers, teacher assistants, and other childcare center staff guide the moral, social and educational development of young children and have a tremendous power to make a positive difference in their lives; and

Whereas, through their work in helping to get children ready for kindergarten, ECE workers make an invaluable contribution to the educational mission of the school districts across California, with future improvement of our schools depending in part on the continued dedication, skill and passion of these educators; and

Whereas, there is a critical link between the quality of early learning experiences for young children and the job quality of those responsible for their care and education; and

Whereas, one key way to improve the quality of early care and education for children is to ensure that the workforce is well-educated, more highly compensated, and that childcare workers have a voice in their workplace;

Resolution in Support of Quality Preschool and Early Childhood Education, continued

Therefore, be it resolved that the California Labor Federation believes that access to high-quality education is the right of every student and the responsibility of us all.

Be it further resolved that the California Labor Federation believes that addressing the readiness gap of our young children before it becomes an achievement gap later could have significant positive impacts on California's educational system.

Be it further resolved that the California Labor Federation believes that the extent of preschool education's positive impact depends on both quality resources for students and the professional development of teachers, paraprofessionals and staff in early education centers.

Be it further resolved that the California Labor Federation believes that the availability of quality preschool gives parents peace of mind knowing that their children's social and cognitive development needs are being met, while helping families by enabling parents to work, attend school, or get job training, all of which can translate to higher earning potential.

Be it finally resolved that given the need for more effective early childhood education opportunities in California as evidenced by the information contained in the 2007-08 RAND studies, and since what our families and communities receive in return on ECE investment far exceeds what we get on most private or public investments, the California Labor Federation does hereby urge government to make significant targeted investments in expanding access to quality preschool education by prioritizing the recruitment, retention and the professional development of quality childcare center staff and urges California residents to do the same.

Submitted for consideration by Marty Hittelman, President, California Federation of Teachers