# Early Child Development Policy

## City of Pasadena

developed by

THE CITY OF PASADENA'S HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

ADOPTED BY CITY COUNCIL ON MARCH 23, 2015

For children to perform better in school and in life, we cannot wait until they enter kindergarten to promote their health, safety and learning.

*A wealth of research clearly demonstrates the importance of early brain development, the effectiveness of best practices in early learning and child rearing, and the cost-effectiveness of investing in early childhood development. This presents a compelling rationale to concentrate on children's early years.*

# Background

The City of Pasadena has a long history of introducing policies and investing in strategies that support the overall well being of everyone living within its borders. The City has also long recognized that the quality of life of its residents is enriched when every member of the community has access to shelter, food, protection, health care, education, recreation and creative opportunities. The City's Policy on Children, Youth, and Families originating in 1989, affirms this commitment and acknowledges that every child is a person worthy of the opportunity to develop to his or her fullest potential.

Since establishing the Policy on Children, Youth and Families, the City has evolved its thinking and understanding of how best to approach improved outcomes for children, youth and families. As is evidenced by the updated Policy on Children, Youth and Families in 2012 – 2013, along with recently adopted 2013 -2016 School/City/Community Work Plan, recently renamed Collaborate PASadena, there is renewed recognition that efforts to improve the lives of Pasadena residents will require a comprehensive approach that involves cross sector policies and comprehensive service strategies. These policies and service strategies must also address the changing needs throughout the life course and respond to the differing developmental needs of children, youth, and adults as they age.

While the School/City/Community Work Plan established goals from early childhood into early adulthood, City leaders recognize that more than ever before, it is understood that the first five years of a child's life shape their future learning, behaviors and health. There is also a great potential for improving the health of the population through a focus on early childhood outcomes as several decades of research has established the critical influence of early childhood experiences and environments on health and well-being throughout one's life course. Further research has also established that Investments in young children's health, early childhood education, and well-being pay high dividends for taxpayers and the economy as a whole. Yet, while we are well aware of the lifelong societal implications of children being healthy, doing well in school, and getting along with others, many children are not reaching these goals.

# New Understanding of Child Well-being

We have long recognized, and new research and understanding of brain development and functioning have even further confirmed, that the early years of a child's life are vital when it comes to child development, and a child's early experiences have effects that last a lifetime. Healthy brain development in the early years provides the building blocks for educational achievement, economic productivity, responsible citizenship, lifelong health, strong communities, and successful parenting of the next generation. The crucial period for brain development is between late pregnancy and age three, well before children enter pre-school or kindergarten. Further, the

physical, mental and social well-being of children will be determined to a large extent by whether they are brought up in nurturing, low stress environments that expose them to healthy activities and positive social relations.

The greatest impacts will come from policies, and investments, that support service strategies and other efforts that improve family and community environments in which all children grow up. Policies and service strategies that empower parents and caretakers and ensure that they have adequate financial resources, stable housing, access to quality health care, adequate nutrition, high- quality early childhood programs and K-12 education are necessary. There is also a need to have policies that support a family's ability to live in, and contribute to, safe and healthy neighborhoods. Both a family and neighborhood approach is what is needed to help children grow into healthy thriving adults: healthy adults who are not only able to support themselves and their families, but who are also able to contribute to the economic viability of the City overall.

# Our Local Context

Pasadena currently has a population of approximately 8,274 children between 0-5 years of age. In 2013 there were 1,973 births to Pasadenans. This a slight decrease in overall births that is reflective of a national trend that has been occurring since a small peak in 2007. In 2007, Pasadena had a total of 2,221 births.

According to Pasadena Public Health Department, of the babies born in 2013, 32% were Hispanic, 32% were White, 25% were Asian, 7% were Black, along with 3% identified as other. The race/ethnicity of newborns highlights the on-going change in demographics and diversity of the City's population. Of the total births in 2013, close to half (approximately 49%) or 966 babies were born to first time mothers. The majority of women are accessing prenatal and infant health care with 88% of women accessing care in the 1st trimester, 8.5% in the 2nd and 1.9% in the 3rd, with 6 women not accessing any prenatal care and the remaining 23 women's history of care was unknown. Half of the babies born in Pasadena are born at Huntington Hospital.

By the end of 2013, Pasadena Public Health Department had 4,850 families enrolled in the federally–funded Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. Pasadena's WIC offers supplemental food, nutrition education and breastfeeding support to families in Pasadena, Altadena, and Sierra Madre with women and/or children who are at nutritional risk by providing nutrition education along with monthly food coupons. Participating family's income must meet 185% of the current federal poverty guidelines. Families with low or moderate-income levels may qualify. Participants must also be in one of the following categories: pregnant woman, breastfeeding woman, postpartum woman up to 6 months (if not breastfeeding) or up to 12 months (if breastfeeding), children under 5 years of age, and fathers, grandparents, or foster parents taking care of children under the age of 5 may be eligible. The far majority of children seen by the WIC are between the ages of 0-3. Just over 70% are Hispanic, approx. 11. 5% African American, along with 7.5 % White, close to 7% Asian and close to 4% women and children more than one race.

As poverty is generally considered a risk factor and is associated with poor childhood outcomes, the following map (MAP 1) shows the correlation between households with income below poverty and Pasadena's population of children age 0-5 by neighborhood.

This past year the City and School District teamed with UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities to introduce a measure of children's developmental progress at age 5. The Early Developmental Index (EDI) captures children's outcomes across 5 developmental domains including physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge. These domains correspond to the national indicators used to determine school readiness. The EDI

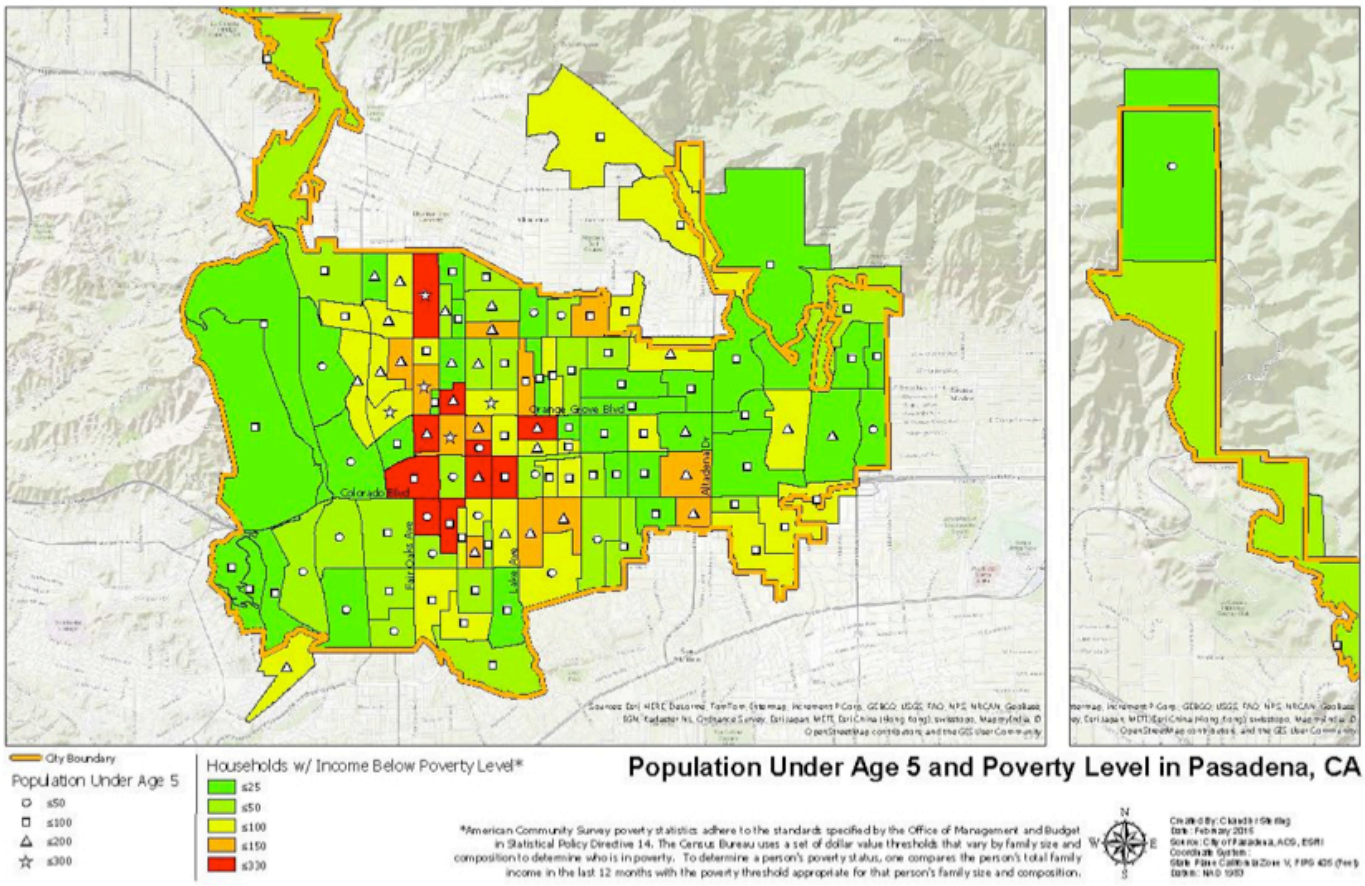
was administered to all kindergarteners within the Pasadena Unified School District. Recognizing there are children with the community who are not attending public schools, there still remains the opportunity to engage the private schools in the area to participate in this data capture on behalf of the City and to have the most complete picture possible of the developmental progress of all young children residing in Pasadena.

Working with the data available, the City's Department of Information and Technology was able to map the data of Pasadena's public school students to view children's developmental outcomes in relationship to the neighborhood conditions in which they live. EDI provides the City with data on early childhood outcomes that are the result of the corresponding family actions, and family and neighborhood conditions influencing young children's lives.

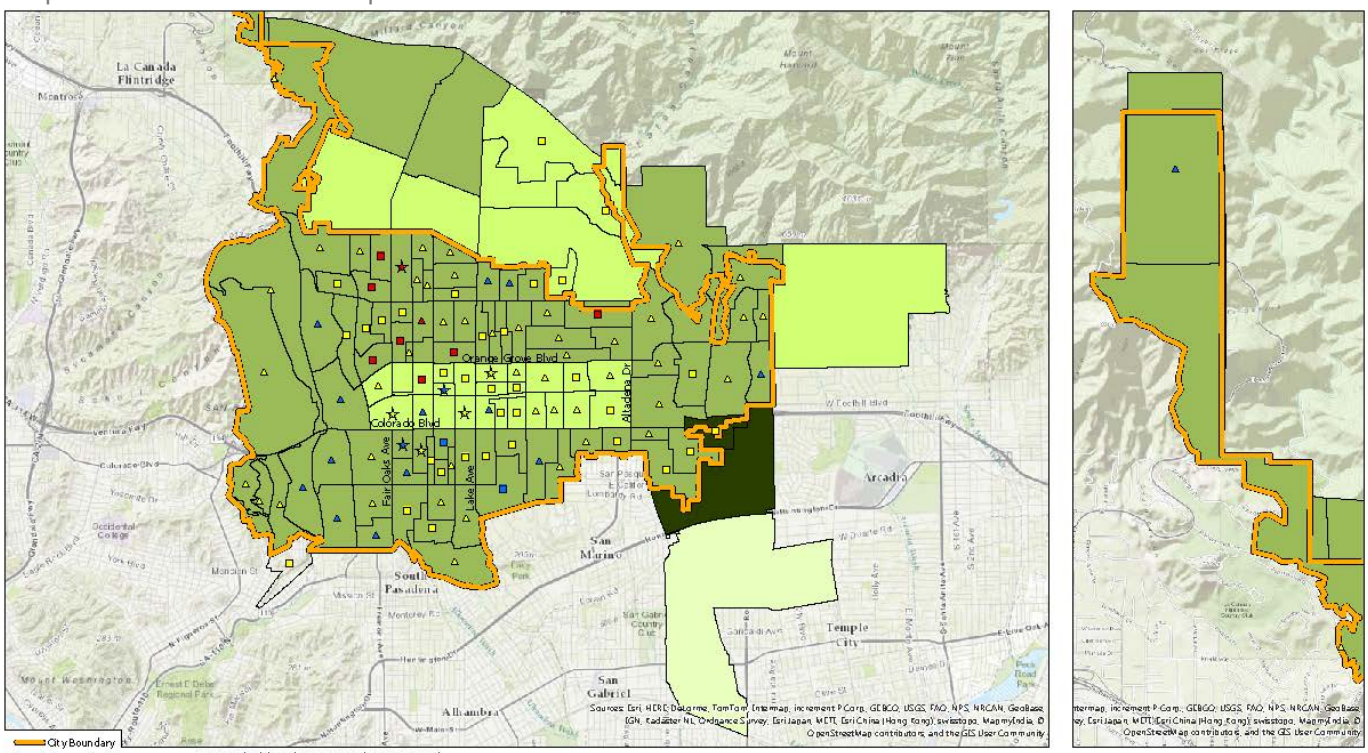
The maps provided help demonstrate the opportunity now available to the city to focus and align efforts of the broad array of the providers offering services, guidance and support to families with young children. The following two EDI maps presented focus on different domains (MAP 2: Social Emotional Competence, and MAP 3: Communications Skills) to underscore that the types of early childhood vulnerability differs by neighborhood and childhood vulnerability does not simply correlate to those neighborhoods with more of a concentration of households in poverty. These two domains were highlighted as many have come to recognize that social emotional competence is the basis for cognitive skills. For example, social-emotional competence refers to a child's capacity for self-confidence, trust, and empathy as well as the capacity to develop competencies in language usage and cognitive curiosity. Strong social-emotional development is a predictor of later academic, social and emotional success.

The maps highlight what we know as the reality for many of Pasadena's families regardless of income. Many families are experiencing stresses and strains that have an impact on their time and ability to continuously nurture and further their child's development.

Map 1: Under Age 5 Poverty Level



## Map 2 Social Emotional Competence




City Boundary
Census Block Groups
EDI - Social Competence
0% - 4%
5% - 8%
9% - 12%
13% - 16%
17% or more

Households w/ Income Below Poverty*
≤50
50 - 150
150 - 350

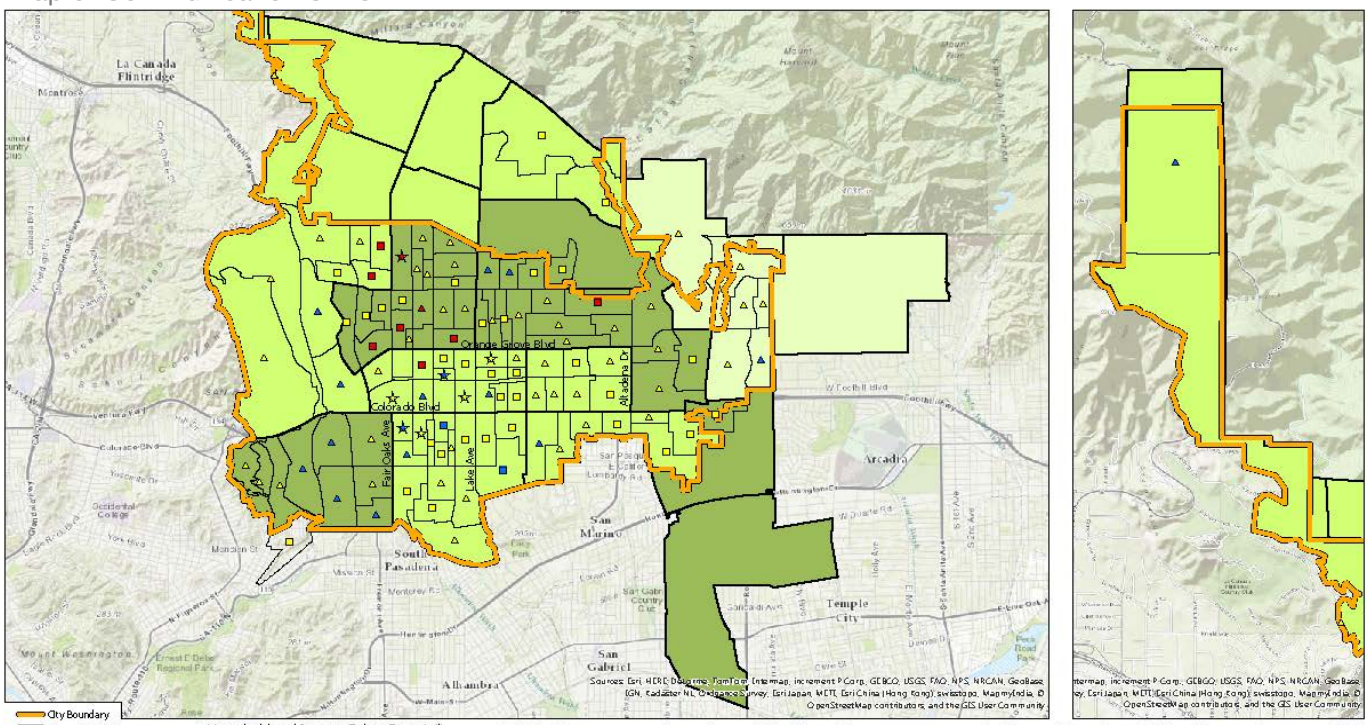
Age Under 5
≤50
50 - 150
150 - 350

**EDI Social Competence, Poverty, and Age Under 5 in Pasadena, CA**

*American Community Survey poverty statistics adhere to the standards specified by the Office of Management and Budget in Statistical Policy Directive 14. The Census Bureau uses a set of dollar value thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. To determine a person's poverty status, one compares the person's total family income in the last 12 months with the poverty threshold appropriate for that person's family size and composition.

Created By: Clairdr Sterling
Date: February 2015
Source: City of Pasadena, ACS, ESRI
Coordinate System:
State Plane California Zone V, FIPS 405 (Feet)
Datum: NAD 1983

## Map 3: Communication Skills




City Boundary
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**EDI Communication Skills, Poverty, and Age Under 5 in Pasadena, CA**

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# Our City's Assets

In 1994, the City of Pasadena demonstrated its commitment to providing quality services and care for its young children by adopting its second Child Care Policy. Within the past twenty years, our community can point to important "assets" as a result of this policy and commitment.

- Model early childhood programs and after school programs
- Deep resources of early learning and early childhood experts who are actively engaged in the lives of our young children
- A unique community: very involved across all sectors, all geographic areas of the city, active citizen involvement
- Major institutions of higher education: Cal Tech, Pasadena City College, Pacific Oaks, Fuller
- In Pasadena, more non-profit agencies per capita than anywhere else and organizations serving children, youth, and families
- The Pasadena Public Library offers events and activities (such as STORYTIMES) for infants and toddlers and their families
- The City's approach to neighborhood improvement and civic engagement that is supported through the City's Neighborhood Connections
- The City has its own Public Health Department. The Department recently launched the Live Well Campaign that also contributes to improving the overall health and well being of Pasadena residents at the individual level and through neighborhood-based strategies
- ***Collaborate PASadena***: The School/City/Community Work Plan, the purpose of which is to help children succeed through the alignment of community resources and focuses on meeting the early developmental needs for infants and children, birth to five, through Result Area #1
- Pasadena is starting with data that provides a much clearer and more comprehensive picture of our children's population

# Our Opportunities

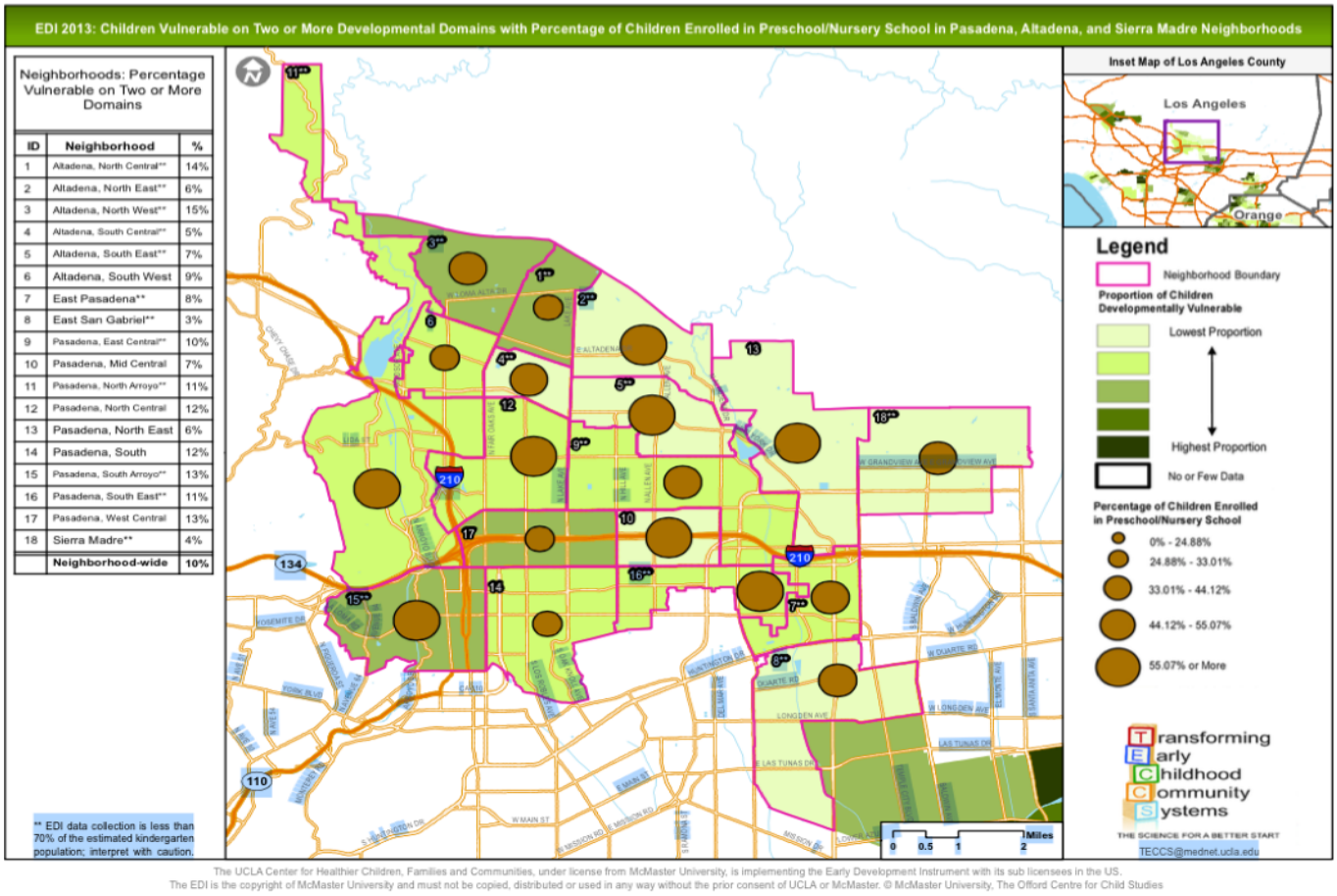
The City of Pasadena has a diverse array of services and supports available to young children and their families. This provides an incredible opportunity to link health, early childhood education, child welfare and family support services to reach all families with young children with information and support at the earliest possible moment and have services available as needed for those that require more help and support. The challenge and opportunity is to align, coordinate, and improve the quality of services and supports available to families with young children. Ideally, we should be seeing far fewer children experiencing vulnerabilities and far more children developmentally ready or “on track” when entering into kindergarten.

The City also has the opportunity to reach all families with young children very early in the child’s life. Over 88% of women are already seeking prenatal care. Half of the newborns in the City are born in one location. WIC is serving close to 88% of women and children eligible for its program. Looked at collectively, this provides an almost universal reach to families at the critical time of development, when children are 0-3 years of age. If these services alone were coordinated to offer mutually re-enforcing messages on early brain development, guidance and support on nurturing and care, milestones of child development, the sign and impact of maternal depression, and linkage to neighborhood resources for on-going family support and activities, a huge burden would be lifted on families needing to find these services and critical information on their own. Also, considering half of the children born in Pasadena are born to first time parents, the need to reach out to new families with child development information and parenting support should occur prior, or as close as possible, to the time of birth and throughout a child’s first years.

Assuming children’s developmental outcomes can be improved once entering pre-school or kindergarten, these post 0-5 years miss the critical early years of brain development. This is not to say that a child’s participation in a quality pre-school program will not improve children’s development. These programs simply come too late and cannot fully replace the overall gains from nurturing children’s healthy brain development within their earliest years.

That being said, quality pre-school programs and kindergarten remain important opportunities to support children’s development and learning. Knowing how well children are doing developmentally and by neighborhood, provides the early childhood community the information they need to improve their programs and offer information to families, and home day care providers, and family, friends and neighbor child care to enhance strategies that can address particular vulnerabilities.

Map 4: Developmentally Vulnerable Children




As an example, the map above (Map 4) shows EDI results of children vulnerable on two or more domain of the 5 domains as well as the population of children participating in pre-school.

Again, Pasadena is a city with a rich array of services and supports from which to build upon to more effectively improve the outcomes of Pasadena's youngest residents. Like many other U.S. Cities, Pasadena is grappling with changing demographics, a changing economy and a new and growing knowledge base on how best to prepare our children and youth for future success. Revising our policies and investments in ways that most contribute to optimizing young children's healthy development has a direct benefit in the lives of young children but is also a long term investment in the future health and well being of the City as a whole.

# Other Cities Approaches

A review of the most advanced efforts in cities across our country reveals that municipal leaders are increasingly aware that the learning experiences and opportunities available to children early in life are key predictors of their future academic success and well- being. The National League of Cities, Educational Alignment for Young Children, provides excellent models of emerging city strategies (Boston, Hartford, San Antonio, San Jose, Seattle) for ensuring that more children are succeeding by the end of third grade and on the road to achieving their potential throughout their life course.

An examination of the early childhood/early learning landscape in our city reveals these findings:

- A Non-System: Pasadena's public/private "system" of early childhood services and policies is a complicated and uncoordinated collection of programs. More information and focus is needed to help track children and measure overall progress.
- Little Cohesion/Leadership: No cohesive, coordinated system exists to guide early childhood policy, implementation and services. Day-to-day, no entity is accountable for overall alignment and coordination of programs and activities affecting infants and young children and their families.
- Outcomes Needing Improvement: Most outcomes for young children and their families – especially in health care, school performance, and early learning quality experiences – severely lag state and national benchmarks.
- Quality Services and Resources: Quality early learning and care services do exist as do use of " best practices" for some children, but we have too many families struggling to get the information and services they need to best care for their children. More early care and learning spaces and opportunities are needed, health services and infant care require improved availability and coordination, and family support services are in great need of expansion and availability. Much more can be done to coordinate these services and to get services as early as possible to those children and families who most need the support.
- Fragmented Spending and Resources: Though the City has limited financial resources to meet the large need, in taking leadership through this policy and its implementation, it can maximize its own resources and leverage others which currently exist or which may become available in the future. This role maximizes the City's impact with minimum financial commitment.

Ultimately, City institutions – city government, schools, community organizations, business – can do more. To make the city a thriving community, positive early childhood and early learning experiences must happen for every child in Pasadena. Pasadena's future depends on healthy and successful young children. To achieve this, we must work together to nurture young children and strengthen each family's capacity to take the lead in supporting their child's healthy development and well-being.

With increased public will, coordination of policy and services, with political leadership, and with a long-term commitment, the community can make a difference. We must have city-wide emphasis on the young child. The City of Pasadena will be a catalyst to address the early care and development, health and early learning needs of the Pasadena Community. By using its resources as a model employer, educator and facilitator, the City of Pasadena can continue to work toward its commitment that every child has the opportunity to develop to his or her fullest potential. The City must make good on its promise to our young children.

# VISION FOR PASADENA

**A City that nurtures every child and creates an environment where young children are healthy, safe, and find early success in school and life.**

*The **Master Plan for the Young Child** is a five-year plan to unite diverse programs and services in the City of Pasadena and to meld them into a cohesive coordinated family-centered system that focuses policy, services, and pursuit of public and private funding options to improve the lives of young children, ages birth to five. The Master Plan will bring direction and a comprehensive approach to early childhood policy and services in Pasadena.*

The Master Plan identifies the following action steps:

1. **Approve the Master Plan and the Eight Building Blocks** that will form the foundation for achieving the vision of our City for the health, safety, and success of our young children. The building blocks will form a comprehensive framework to advocate and deliver services to young children and their families.

2. **Create an independent Office of the Young Child** that will coordinate and implement early childhood policy, services, and the Master Plan to form a cohesive strategy with a single goal. The Office of the Young Child would be an independent office that works across all City departments similar to how the Northwest Programs Office functions. This policy statement and Master Plan expresses the City's commitment to expand early childhood services throughout Pasadena. All relevant City departments, commissions, committees and boards will foster and support this policy.

3. **Rename and redefine the position of the Child Care Coordinator as the Early Child Development Coordinator** whose focus is to develop a systematic approach to support the healthy development of the young child. The Coordinator will guide the work of the Office of the Young Child. The Coordinator and Support Staff will be responsible for developing and implementing the action steps for the important building blocks of the five-year Master Plan and will act as staff liaisons to the early childhood leaders and organizations within our city and community.

4. **Create an Early Child Development Standing Committee of the Human Services Commission** that will support the work of the Office of the Young Child, will serve in an advisory capacity to the Human Services Commission on the implementation of the Master Plan, and will provide regular reports to the Human Services Commission. The Committee will be broad-based and include cross-sector representatives from the school district, business, public and private community agencies and organizations concerned with the needs and welfare of children and families, and representatives from City Departments. Membership of the Committee composition will be the responsibility of the Human Services Commission.

5. **Continue to build and strengthen practices that engage parents, families and other adults.** This means inviting parents to help govern programs, build parental capacity to participate, and build their skills to make their families stronger.

# Core of the Master Plan: Eight Building Blocks

At the core of the Master Plan are the eight Building Blocks, constituting a comprehensive continuum that addresses early childhood needs of children birth to five years old, and those of their families. The complete plan will outline the strategic actions to implement the building blocks and a five-year timetable. The strategic actions of the Plan will be developed by the Early Child Development Coordinator in partnership with the Early Child Development Standing Committee of the Human Services Commission, and in collaboration with the early childhood leaders and organizations within our city and community.

## Elements of An Aligned System for Young Children 1

A collaboration of early childhood education professionals, child development advocates, health professionals, community members and civic leaders will guide the development of the Master Plan, a five-year action planning tool, implementation guide, and resource for greater accountability. The strategic actions of the plan will focus on the elements of an aligned system for young children:

- Formal partnerships and collaboration
- Access to high quality early education, heath, and family support programs
- Parent engagement and family supports
- Programs to facilitate smooth transition to school
- Communication and data-sharing
- Leveraging funding

## Partnerships/ Collaboration 2

The City will work collaboratively with the school district, early childhood community and other community partners (a) to maximize the utilization of available child development resources, (b) to support quality improvements in early learning/child care, and (c) to promote the delivery of integrated services for children and their families. The purpose of relationships fostered is to develop creative, cost effective and affordable solutions to the problem of accessibility to quality child care within the community. The City recognizes that resource and referral information is a benefit to families and employers and will not duplicate the work of existing agencies.

This policy statement and Master Plan expresses the City's commitment to expand early childhood services throughout Pasadena. All relevant City departments, commissions, committees and boards will foster and support this policy.

## Data Collection - Measure of Success 3

The Master Plan recommends building an information system (1) to enable the city to set goals for childhood outcomes and to measure the results, (2) to support continuous improvement through data collection and evaluation, (3) to promote increased understanding and engagement of parents/family in their role of the child's developmental success, (4) to improve the retention, preparation, and professional development and quality of the early learning workforce, and (5) to articulate with other local, state and national initiatives.

## Health and Wellness Strategies for Infants/Young Children 4

The young child's physical health, social and emotional health, and developmental screening and monitoring are critically important. Since the well-being of children is dependent on those who care for them, the most important measures that can be taken to improve health support are those that enhance the capacity of parents and caretakers to nurture and care for them. Some strategies that can contribute to health and wellness include:

- Ensure parent and caregiver access to a primary care medical home, which includes patient-centered healthcare, comprehensive, coordinated care, and preventive counseling and services, including prenatal care, developmental and maternal depression screenings, well child visits and vaccinations, all of which are of high quality and are affordable.
- Provide linkages to early intervention services and supports for infants and toddlers with disabilities.
- Establish linkages with Child Welfare Services and Infant and Toddler Mental Health Services to improve early access for families eligible for home visiting programs for children 0-5, especially for families at risk. Home visits and support from paraprofessionals using "best practice" models produce measurable benefits in parental attitudes toward children, improve parent-child interaction, significantly reduce child abuse and neglect, and increase readiness for school.
- Empower parents and caregivers to be engaged and proactive for the health and wellness of their child.
- Improve knowledge and skills in child development for families, beginning prenatally, giving them the tools to increase participation in the child's physical, education, and emotional growth.
- Promote improved early childhood nutrition by promoting breast-feeding and baby-friendly policies throughout the City.
- Ensure that all City departments, contractors, and community partners use the most current age-appropriate nutrition and physical activity guidelines and encourage and facilitate adoption of these practices by parents and caregivers of infants and young children.
- Create a bridge between early learning, family support and healthcare, ensuring that children arrive at school having received necessary exams and screenings, because healthy children feel better and learn better.
- Provide an environment in each child care center that supports healthy eating, promotes physical activity, and reduces screen time for young children, who spend a large part of their day and may receive half or more of their daily nutritional needs while in child care.

## Access to High-Quality Early Education Experiences in Variety of Settings 5

Quality early childhood experiences are fundamental to the social, emotional, cognitive and physical development of every child. Affordable, dependable, quality early childhood care and education are an integral part of family life in the 21st century. Structured childcare and early education opportunities provide children with experiences that set the stage for later school success. Within five years, the implementation of the Master Plan and its strategic actions should assure (1) that every pre- school age child in Pasadena has the opportunity to enroll in a quality, full-time early childhood education program, (2) the expansion of available licensed infant and toddler care for Pasadena residents in programs that meet national quality standards, (3) that every center-based early care and learning program in Pasadena meets the quality standards as defined by nationally accrediting organizations, and (4) improvement of the quality of family childcare services, both formal and informal providers of care.

## Neighborhood -Based Parent Engagement & Family Supports 6

This has been identified as one of the common elements of effective early learning systems alignment: Parent engagement and family supports to ensure that parents are empowered to be their child's first teacher and most important advocate, and to connect families with the diverse supports that they need for a safe, healthy and economically secure household. The Master Plan will focus on initiatives promoting parent engagement, including parent leadership training and professional development for family support workers. The research developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy in Strengthening Families serves as an informed approach and guide to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs and communities in building five protective factors:

- Parent Resilience: Managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges, adversity and trauma
- Social Connections: Having a sense of connectedness with constructive, supportive people and institutions
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development: Understanding parenting best practices and developmentally appropriate child skills and behaviors
- Concrete Support in Times of Need: Identifying, accessing and receiving needed adults, child and family services
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children: Forming secure adult relationships; experiencing, regulating and expressing emotions

## Culturally Specific Programs for English Language Learners 7

The Master Plan should focus on high-quality bilingual and culturally appropriate family support services. The City in partnership with community leaders and organizations must foster culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate programming and practices. The following principles should be embodied in program standards, parent engagement and family supports, including requirements that include the following:

- Programs' support must support children in the essential domains of school readiness by providing an environment of acceptance that supports and respects language, culture, ethnicity, gender, and family composition.
- Teachers and providers must demonstrate an understanding of the child's family culture and, whenever possible, speak the child's language.
- Programs must integrate meaningful engagement practices that help families foster home language and literacy development. Interactions with families must be respectful of each family's diversity and cultural and ethnic background, and goals for their children.
- As with screening and assessment of all young children, a comprehensive assessment system for young English language learners should be guided by specific, beneficial purposes, with appropriate adaptations to meet the needs of children whose home language is not English.

## Transition from Pre-School to Kindergarten

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Effective transition from pre-school to kindergarten is a critical pathway in a young child's development. Through its Master Plan, the City, in partnership with the school district, early childhood leaders and teachers, and parents and families, will foster the following:

- Continuous communication among the family, the school, and early childhood providers during this important time in a child's educational life.
- Helping families understand school registration processes and making children and parents feel comfortable and welcome in the new school environment.
- Sharing pre-school experience information at the right time with the family and the child's kindergarten teacher.


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## Data:

Birth Data, WIC and Demographic Data
Source: Pasadena Public Health Department
Source: Collaborate PASadena – School and Community Workplan

Map Data
Source: Population Age 0 to 5 – 2014/2019 Esri US Demographic Updates
Source: Households with Income below Poverty Level – 2008-2012 American Community Survey (ACS)
Estimates Source: Social Competence – 2014 Early Developmental Index – Pasadena Unified School District
Source: Communication Skills – 2014 Early Developmental Index – Pasadena Unified School District

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