Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) Mixed Delivery System Planning Report

San Mateo County Office of Education

September 2024

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 2

Summary of Planning Process 4

Local Data: Enrollment Projections, Child Outcomes, Family Needs, and Workforce Needs 7

Challenges, Opportunities and Promising Practices 11

Recommendations and Next Steps 19

Appendix 1: Acknowledgements 25

Appendix 2: Research and Reference Materials 26

Appendix 3: UPK Workforce Requirements, Pathways Diagrams, and Grant Opportunities 28

Appendix 4 – 4Cs Report: UPK Parent Survey Findings 34

Appendix 5 – 4Cs Report: Provider Insights on UPK Implementation 69

Appendix 6 – Summary of UPK Recommendations Community Survey 99

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report outlines the strategic planning efforts to establish a comprehensive, "mixed delivery" Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) system in San Mateo County. This initiative is aimed at ensuring that all 4-year-olds and an increased number of at-promise 3-year-olds have access to full-day, high-quality early education and care programs before kindergarten entry. The report synthesizes data and community input to create strategic recommendations to address local needs and enhance early childhood education outcomes.

Planning Process

In September 2023, the Child Care Partnership Council at the San Mateo County Office of Education convened the UPK Mixed Delivery System Planning Committee (UPKMD Committee) with support from a California Department of Education planning grant. The UPKMD Committee's mission was to create a plan that reflects the diverse needs and inputs of community stakeholders and preserves a "mixed delivery system" of UPK options for families. The committee was composed of representatives from a wide range of sectors, including school districts, private preschools, Head Start, family child care homes, and other early education providers.

Key Focus Areas

1. **Community Engagement and Partnerships**:
    - Importance of providing families with diverse program choices.
    - Emphasis on the need for streamlined eligibility and better information dissemination.
2. **Workforce Recruitment and Professional Learning**:
    - Addressing the critical need for increasing the workforce and providing targeted professional development.
3. **Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**:
    - Promoting research-based curriculum that is inclusive of all children, including dual language learners and children with disabilities.
    - Aligning assessment tools and instructional practices across different UPK settings.
4. **Facilities, Services, and Operations**:
    - Optimizing funding models to support various UPK options.
    - Ensuring facilities meet the needs of children ages 3 and 4, particularly with the projected increase in Transitional Kindergarten (TK) students in school districts.

Data and Findings

The report includes local data on enrollment projections, child outcomes, family needs, and workforce needs. Key findings indicate:

- Significant growth in TK enrollment, creating staffing and facilities challenges for school districts.

- A projected deficit of subsidized preschool spaces for income-eligible children.
- Lower demand for market-rate preschool spaces, with private programs needing to respond to changing demographics.
- Targeted language and literacy interventions produce a positive effect on children's Kindergarten Readiness.
- Program quality, affordability, and full-day or flexible scheduling options are top of mind for families.
- A communications campaign on family choice and UPK options is needed.
- A significant increase to the UPK workforce is needed to meet demand.
- Family child care and center-based providers need more information regarding the evolution of UPK in San Mateo County and clear pathways for provider engagement in the UPK Planning Process.

Recommendations

The UPKMD Committee has crafted **initial recommendations** to support the implementation of Universal PreKindergarten for all 3- and 4-year olds in San Mateo County. The eleven recommendations are organized by Focus Area and are not listed in priority order. The report provides strategies to support each recommendation.

Community Engagement and Partnerships With a Focus on Equity

Recommendation 1A - Community Engagement: Prioritize involving families and providers in UPKMD design and implementation.

Recommendation 1B - Community Partnerships: Foster a culture that promotes partnerships among all UPK providers –including Private Preschool, Family Child Care, Head Start, State Preschool, After School, and School Districts – to support UPK implementation that meets child and family needs.

Recommendation 1C - Communications: Develop and implement a communications plan that informs families, UPK providers and Community about UPKMD options in a centralized, clear manner.

Workforce Recruitment and Professional Learning

Recommendation 2A – Workforce Recruitment: Support recruitment strategies that address workforce shortages in all UPKMD settings.

Recommendation 2B – Professional Learning: Support degree and credentialing programs, coaching and training for workers in all UPKMD settings that raise instructional quality, provide career growth, promote developmentally appropriate practices, give credit for prior learning/experience, and are accessible to all workers.

High Quality Pre-K: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Recommendation 3A – Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment: Prioritize implementation of research-based and evidence-validated preschool and TK curricula that support the learning and development of the whole child.

Recommendation 3B – Longitudinal Data: Expand and deepen current preschool to third grade integrated, longitudinal data strategies in order to understand the impact of early childhood education on student outcomes countywide over time, and to use the information for data driven improvement countywide.

Facilities, Services and Operations

Recommendation 4A – Needs Assessment Data: Share needs assessment data with UPKMD providers to drive program implementation that meets community, family, and child needs.

Recommendation 4B – Funding: Maximize use of existing funding streams for UPKMD, and increase resources for UPKMD, so that every 3- and 4-year-old has access to a free or affordable UPKMD program of their choice.

Recommendation 4C – Facilities: Support and enhance existing local efforts to ensure enough high-quality early learning facilities that meet local needs.

Advocacy to Drive UPKMD System Improvement

Recommendation 5A – Advocacy: Develop a UPKMD Policy Platform and advocacy strategy that strengthens the entire UPKMD system.

Next Steps

The report outlines a path forward, including:

- Continued collaboration with community stakeholders.
- Implementation of recommended practices to address identified challenges.
- Ongoing monitoring and adjustment of strategies to ensure effective and equitable UPK delivery.

The appendices provide additional insights, including detailed survey findings, workforce requirements, and provider insights, all contributing to a holistic view of the UPK landscape in San Mateo County. This report serves as a foundational document guiding the efforts to build a robust and inclusive UPK mixed delivery system that meets the diverse needs of the county's children and families.

Summary of Planning Process

In September 2023, the San Mateo County Office of Education, under the auspices of the Child Care Partnership Council, convened the UPK Mixed Delivery System Planning Committee ("UPKMD Committee"). The UPKMD Committee was formed using resources from a California Department of Education planning grant with the intent of creating recommendations for a San Mateo County-specific UPK Mixed Delivery System that reflects the input of a diversity of community stakeholders.

Definition of the Universal PreKindergarten Mixed-Delivery System

The Mixed-Delivery System for prekindergarten includes **all of the early care and education programs** serving three and four-year-old children in San Mateo County. This includes:

- California State Preschool (CSPP)
- Transitional Kindergarten (TK)
- Head Start
- Private, licensed preschool centers and family child care homes
- Before and after school programs serving four-year-olds, including Expanded Learning Opportunities Programs (ELOP)



Throughout this document, the acronym "UPKMD" is used to encompass all of the above listed program types.

Purpose of the UPKMD Committee

Plan for how all 4-year-olds and an increased number of at-promise[1] 3-year-olds in San Mateo County will be able to access full-day learning programs before kindergarten that meet parents' needs in a high quality mixed-delivery system of school districts, preschool programs, and expanded learning offerings.

During the planning process, the UPKMD Committee's objectives included:

- Sharing learning across different types of organizations through presentations and exploration of research and data;
- Building community to develop relationships and new partnerships that will facilitate implementation of the plan;
- Surfacing barriers or challenges to reaching the goal of serving all 3- and 4-year-olds with high quality prekindergarten, and identifying potential solutions to these challenges.

The UPKMD Committee considered four primary focus areas:

1. Community Engagement and Partnerships
2. Workforce Recruitment and Professional Learning
3. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
4. Facilities, Services and Operations

[1] At-promise means student populations that have been underserved such as multilingual learners, children from low-income families, students with learning differences, children in foster care, children experiencing homelessness, children of color, etc.

Composition of the UPKMD Committee

The Committee was composed of thirty-eight individuals from more than twenty-three organizations. See Appendix 1 for the list of committee members. The following stake-holder types were represented:

- Alternative Payment Program (CAPP)
- California General Child Care (CCTR)
- Charter School with TK
- County Office of Education
- California State Preschool Program (CSPP) in both school district and community-based settings
- Family Child Care Homes (FCCHs)
- First 5 San Mateo County
- Head Start
- Institutions of Higher Education
- Local Child Care Planning Council
- Parents
- PreK Educators
- Private, Licensed Preschool and School Age Centers
- Child Care Resource and Referral
- School Districts
- Teachers Association

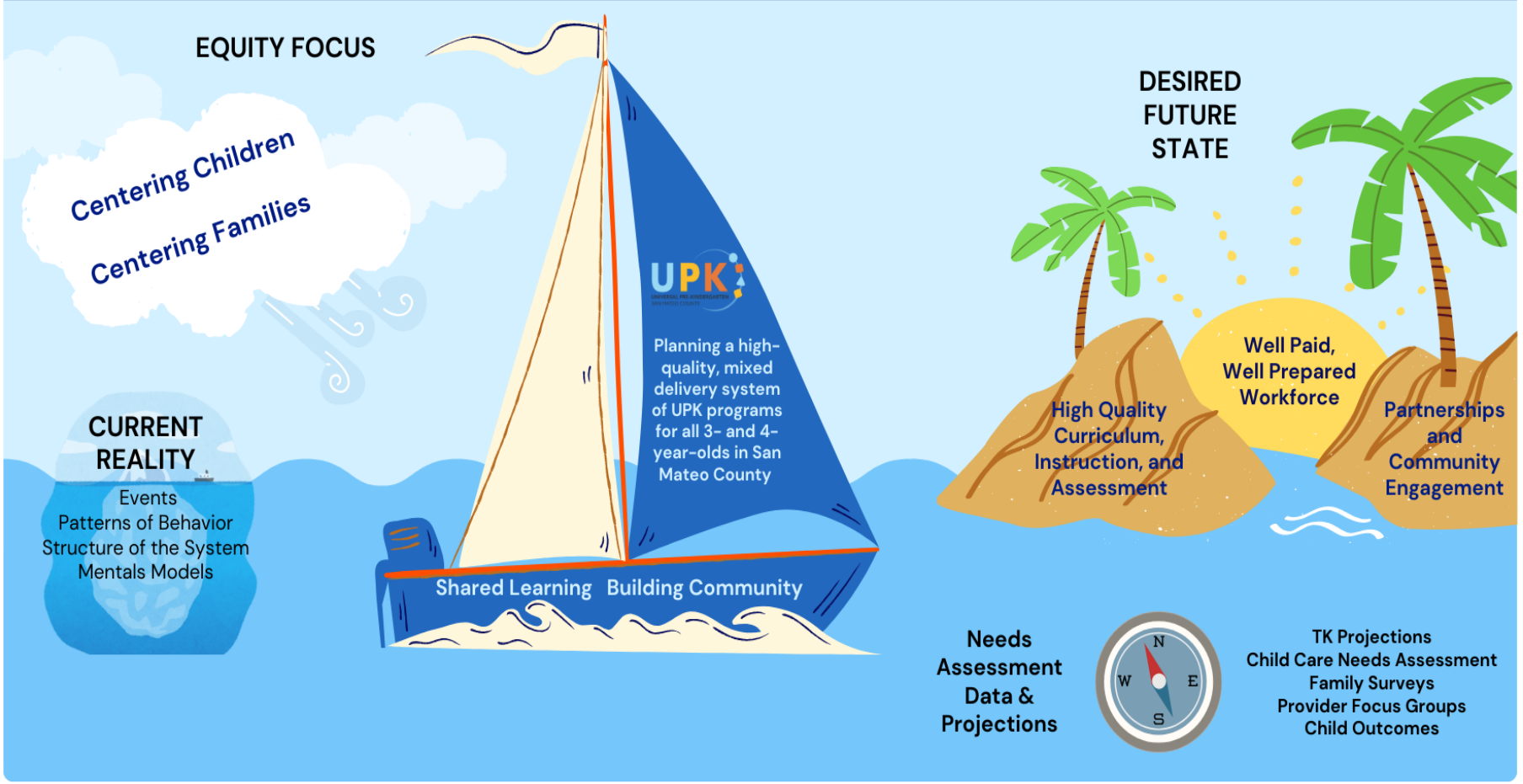
Committee Meetings and Topics

The UPKMD Committee held six meetings between September 2023 and May 2024. The committee alternated between meeting in a hybrid in-person/online format, and online only. The meetings covered the following topics:

- Meeting 1, September 2023: Planning Purpose and Goals, Shared UPK Definitions, Needs Assessment Data, Preliminary Vision
- Meeting 2, October 2023: Building Understanding of UPK Providers, Partnerships to Support UPK, Current Reality versus Desired Future State
- Meeting 3, December 2023: Centering UPK Planning on Children and Families with an Equity Lens
- Meeting 4, February 2024: High Quality PreK Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
- Meeting 5, April 2024: Workforce Recruitment and Development, Partnerships to Support the UPK Workforce, UPK Parent Survey
- Meeting 6, May 2024: Data Review (updated projections, Provider Focus Group), Review of Draft Outline for Planning Report, Reflection on Planning Process and Next Phase

The diagram on the following page was developed for the final meeting to reflect various aspects of the planning process that includes the objectives, topics discussed, reflection on data , and systems-thinking.

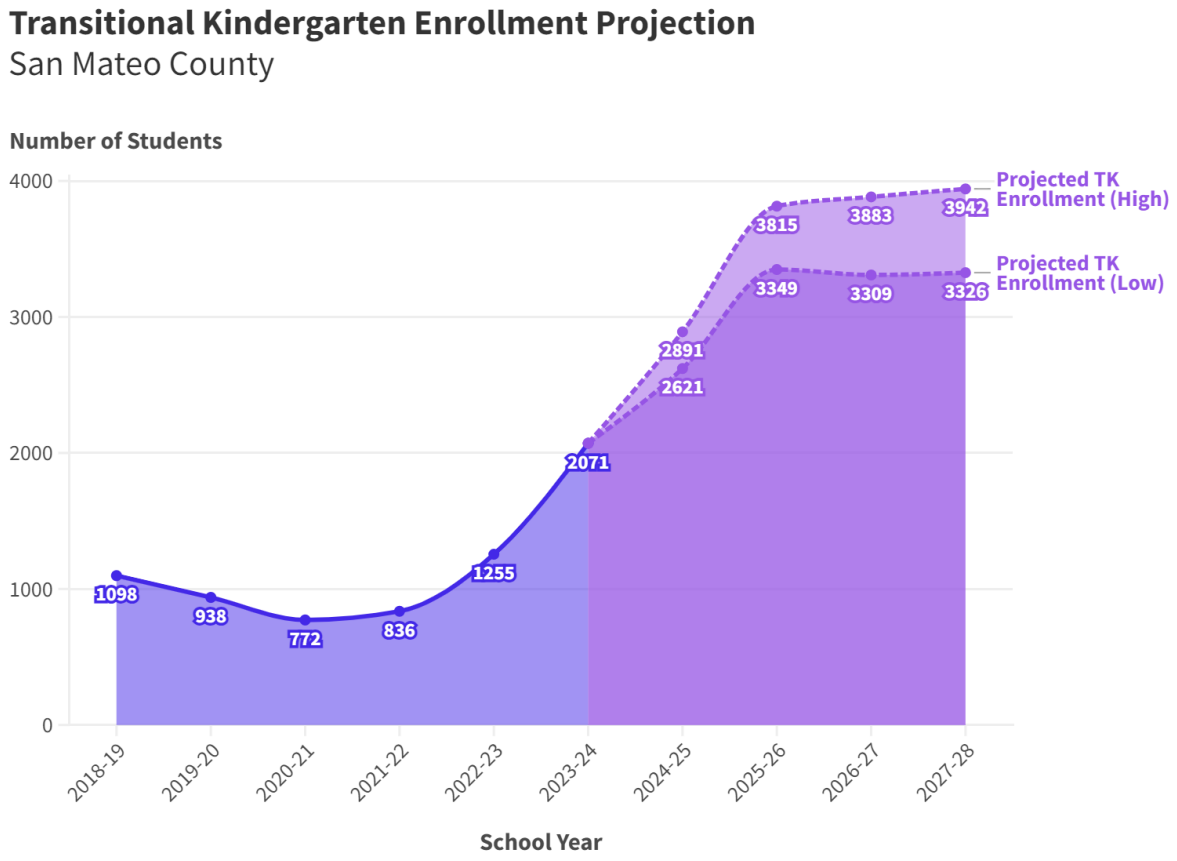
Our UPK Planning Journey



Local Data: Enrollment Projections, Child Outcomes, Family Needs, and Workforce Needs

Universal Transitional Kindergarten (UTK) and Universal PreK (UPK) Projections

The Center for Learning Analytics at the San Mateo County Office of Education used "Census Day" enrollment data from local school districts, combined with birth rate data, to project the **increase in students enrolling in TK programs** by the 2027-28 school year.



This exponential growth in enrollment in TK presents staffing and facilities challenges for local school districts, and has disrupted enrollment in private PreK programs.

Using these TK projections, along with American Community Survey population data and a census of subsidized preschool capacity in the county, the Child Care Partnership Council estimates a **deficit of subsidized preschool** for income-eligible children, as shown in the following table.

	Estimate based on Low TK Enrollment	**Estimate based on High TK Enrollment**
No. 3- and 4-year-olds eligible for Subsidized Preschool	5,582	5,582
No. of subsidy eligible 4-year-olds est. in TK by 2027-28	1,009	1,196
No. funded Subsidized Preschool spaces	2,895	2,895
Unmet need for Subsidized Preschool	**(1,678)**	**(1,491)**

The deficit of subsidized preschool ranges from approximately 1,491 to 1,678 spaces, depending on TK enrollment. Subsidized preschool includes California State Preschool Programs, Head Start, and Alternative Payment Program vouchers. Given the gap between the number of eligible children and the number of funded spaces, it is critical that every subsidized space in the county be filled. There is also a need for additional financial resources to subsidize additional PreK spaces.

Based on the availability of TK and subsidized preschool, there is an estimated **surplus of "market rate" preschool** spaces for families paying tuition to licensed preschool centers and family child care homes.

	Estimate based on Low TK Enrollment	**Estimate based on High TK Enrollment**
No. 3- and 4-year-olds	18,397	18,397
No. 4-year-olds estimated to enroll in TK by 2027-28	3,326	3,942
No. 3- and 4-year-olds in Subsidized Preschool	2,895	2,895
No. of "Market Rate" Preschool Spaces	15,845	15,845
Surplus of "Market Rate" Preschool	**3,669**	**4,285**

The estimated surplus ranges from 3,669 to 4,285 spaces, depending on how many 4-year-olds are enrolled in TK. Note that some of these spaces are utilized by 2-year-olds. According to the 2022 San Mateo County Child Care Needs Assessment, the demand for preschool for 2-year-olds is approximately 6,616 children. The expansion of TK has radically changed the UPK landscape in San Mateo County. Private programs may need to pivot to serving more birth to 2-year-olds or school age children to remain viable since preschool supply exceeds demand. Subsidy funding could also be increased to allow more income-eligible families to access existing spaces in private programs.

Local Data on Child Outcomes

The Big Lift, a collective impact initiative operating in seven school districts in San Mateo County, shared Kindergarten Readiness data with the UPKMD Committee. The Big Lift tracks data on Kindergarten Readiness as preschoolers enter kindergarten, and how Kindergarten Readiness and preschool experience relate to 3rd and 4th grade literacy. One of The Big Lift's most significant findings is that **targeted language and literacy interventions produce a positive effect** on Kindergarten Readiness. In Fall 2021, 39% of children who attended The Big Lift preschools were Kindergarten Ready. Readiness climbs closer to 60% when programs target language and literacy.

Family Needs

The Child Care Coordinating Council of San Mateo County (4Cs) conducted an online survey of families in Spring 2024 to capture perspectives of families to inform UPK planning. There was a total of 338 survey respondents with children ages birth to 5 across the English and Spanish versions of the survey.

The survey identified the following **high-level themes and issues**:

- **Opportunities to Educate Parents on UPK Options:** 46% of English respondents and 30% of Spanish respondents indicated they were not familiar with the concept of UPK. 21% of

survey respondents were "not sure" which type of early education program they would prefer for their children.

- **Strong Support for UPK Overall:** 55% of English respondents and 58% of Spanish respondents categorize UPK as "extremely important." Overall, 90% of respondents believe UPK is very or extremely important for childhood development. 94% of all survey respondents are likely or very likely to enroll their child in UPK if it was available.
- **Family/Parent Choice in a Mixed Delivery System is a High Priority:** 59% found it extremely important that the county have a mixed delivery system of early education programs; 34% very important; and 8% somewhat important.[2] Across all respondents, 26% preferred a public-school based program, 20% preferred a center-based program, 19% preferred a family child care program, 10% preferred a Head Start Program, and 4% preferred a different type of program. Notably, 30% of Spanish-speaking respondents preferred a home-based program.
- **Quality and Affordability are Top of Mind for Parents:** Both quality and affordability ranked in the top three most important factors when choosing a PreK program, for both English and Spanish respondents. Location was also important.[3]
- **Preference for Full Day or Flexible Options:** 61% of English respondents and 66% of Spanish respondents report preferring a full day program for their child.[4] 27% of all respondents preferred a program with flexible options. Only 11% of respondents preferred a part-day program.
- **Suggestions for Equitable Access:** Affordability for all Income Levels, Greater Outreach to Inform of Options, Hours that Meet Parent Needs, Bilingual and Immersion Programs, Celebrations and Inclusion of Cultural Diversity.

See Appendix 4 for the full UPK Parent Survey Findings.

Workforce Needs

In 2022, the Child Care Partnership Council published the *San Mateo County Child Care Needs Assessment*. This needs assessment found the following related to the UPK Workforce:

- Most of the UPK workforce is women of color.
- Workforce needs to increase by 53% to meet demand for child care and preschool.
- 31% of Directors/Owners report understaffing.
- One-third of the workforce was not sure if they would be in the field one year from now.
- Approximately 328 lead teachers in center-based programs for children ages 0 to 5 do not have a BA degree.

In April 2024, 4Cs contracted with VIVA Social Impact Partners to conduct focus groups with family child care and center-based preschool providers. VIVA connected with 38 FCC and 20 center-based providers across five focus groups. FCC focus groups were offered in English, Spanish, and Mandarin. Based on the key themes from the focus groups, VIVA developed thirteen recommendations for the UPKMD Committee. The recommendations most pertinent to the planning purpose of the UPKMD Committee included:

---

[2] In Fall 2023, Ravenswood City School District (RCSD) surveyed families in their community to understand child care and preschool needs. RCSD found that parents reported that their ideal setting for 3- and 4-year-olds is a center-based program (43%), TK (32%), or Other (25%).

[3] RCSD found that Cost of Care was the biggest barrier to adequate care (72%), followed by Quality (40%).

[4] RCSD found that 81% of English speakers and half of Spanish speakers wanted full-day care for their preschool age children; and 13% of English-speakers, 28% of Spanish speakers wanted extended day care (before 8am, after 5pm).

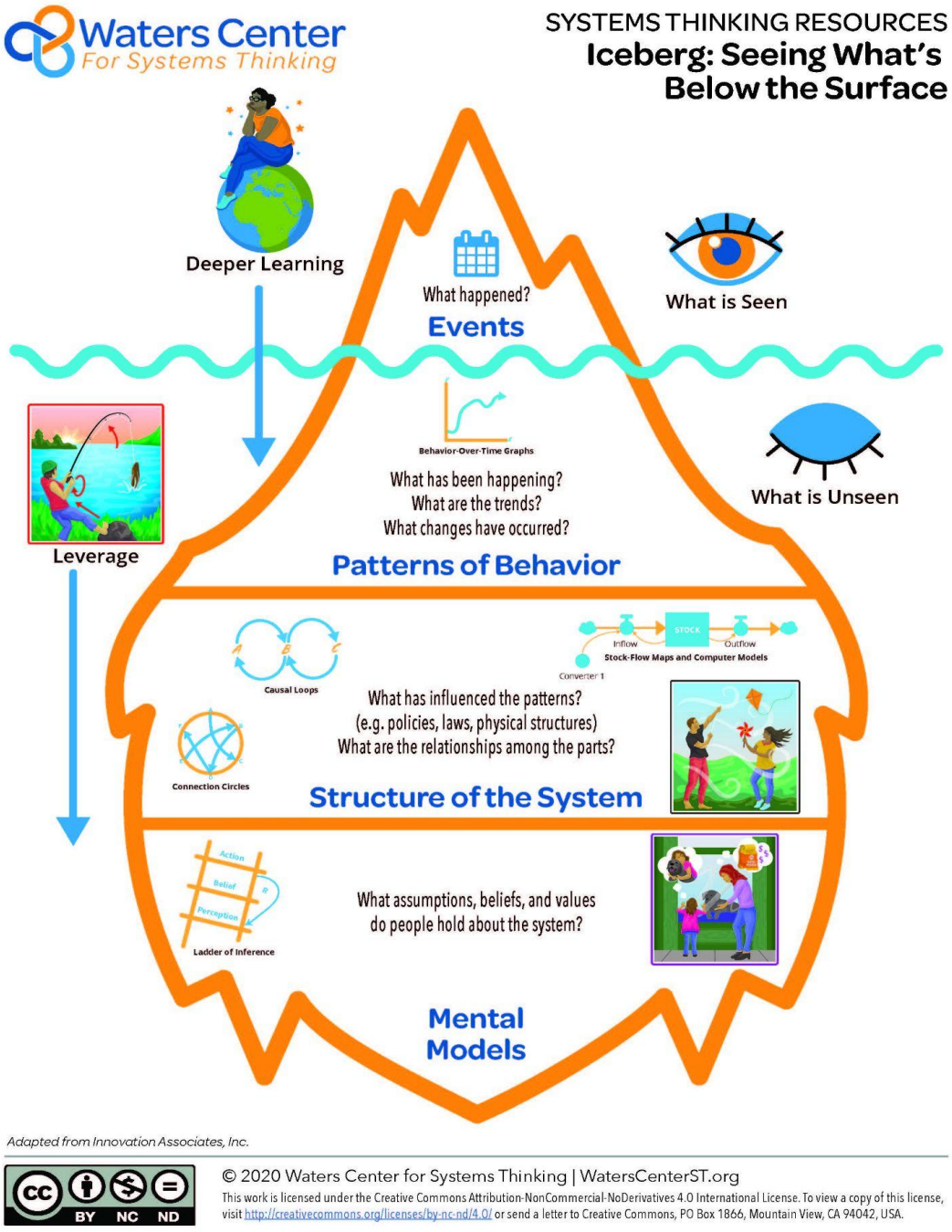
- Create clear pathways for provider engagement in the UPK Planning Process.
- Regularly communicate with FCC and center-based providers regarding the evolution of UPK in San Mateo County and how they can participate.
- Develop partnerships between school districts and other early learning programs.
- Launch a communications campaign on family choice that includes educating providers as trusted messengers.
- Model how implementing a Family Child Care Home Education Network (FCCHEN) would impact family child care provider's time and income.
- Subsidize FCC and center-based care for middle-income families.

The findings from the focus groups have informed the recommendations provided in this report, and have also been shared with relevant partners such as Resource and Referral and County Office of Education. The full report, *Provider Insights on UPK Implementation*, is provided in Appendix 5.

Additional data from elsewhere in California and throughout the nation was reviewed by the UPKMD Committee to inform the recommendations. See Appendix 2 for a bibliography of research shared by presenters and the Committee's "What We're Reading" list.

Challenges, Opportunities and Promising Practices

Committee members were introduced to the *Iceberg: Seeing What's Below the Surface* to use systems-thinking to visualize current reality and desired future reality at different levels of perspective, e.g. patterns of behavior, structure of the system, and mental models. The following figure represents the "Iceberg" model:



© 2020 Waters Center for Systems Thinking | WatersCenterST.org
This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/ or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

For each of the UPK Planning focus areas, the UPKMD Committee documented the challenges and opportunities using the iceberg diagram and the corresponding level of perspective. The Committee's reflections are summarized in the following tables.

Community Engagement and Partnerships with a Focus on Equity

Challenges (Current Reality)	Opportunities (Desired Future Reality)
Patterns of Behavior	
Choice: need to provide families with real choice for 3- and 4-year-olds.	**Choice:** UPK prompts families to consider more deeply programmatic differences. Good information will empower them to make informed choices. **Partnerships:** Successful UPK implementation requires schools and communities to combine funding opportunities and programs to better connect and leverage early childhood, TK-12, and expanded learning systems to offer options that work for children and families.
Structure of the System	
Affordability: mismatch for families who need preschool and cannot afford it but do not qualify for subsidy. **Eligibility:** very complicated to demonstrate eligibility for CSPP/Head Start versus for TK. **Information and awareness:** • Lack of awareness of what is available. • Insufficient information. • Referral organization does not encompass all UPK options. • Families indicate that the 4Cs interface is not user-friendly. • Families are confused with the communication across the county. • TK and Kindergarten not mandatory which also causes confusion.	**Eligibility:** Streamlined eligibility for CSPP and Head Start. **Information and awareness:** • Create one integrated and centralized system that is communicated to families, and a centralized eligibility list for enrollment. • Ensure the Referral system includes detailed information about UPK programs, such as languages offered, enrichment programming, etc. **Preserve Parent Choice/Mixed Delivery Options:** • Ensure equal opportunity to select the program that is best for families, and not just what is available at no cost to them. • Family Child Care: Create a mechanism in San Mateo County for FCC to participate in publicly-funded UPK. • Customize programs to meet family neighborhood needs.
Mental Models	
Beliefs within families/community: • TK is more academic than CSPP or other preschool programs. • Kids will learn when they get to school (learning does not happen until school age 5). • My child is too young to go to school.	Expand the definition/assumption of **UPK: Should be for ALL 3- and 4-year-olds.** Create **better relationships between LEAs and other UPK providers** since they are serving the same children in the community.

Workforce Recruitment and Professional Learning

Challenges (Current Reality)	Opportunities (Desired Future Reality)
Patterns of Behavior	
Teaching Credentials: challenge of how to navigate obtaining teaching credential which is more difficult for family child care providers. Easier to obtain B.A. than teaching credential. **P-3 Credential:** there is excitement for this new credential that will be relevant for early childhood education (ECE).	**Focus for Pipeline Development:** focus on the following sectors of the potential workforce: youth/transitional age youth, parents, and entry-level staff or aides for "grow your own." Support **recruitment and retention of diverse and/or multilingual educators**.
Structure of the System	
Staffing/workforce: • Approximately 328 lead teachers in center-based programs for children ages 0 to 5 do not have a BA degree, based on the Needs Assessment report. • Lack of pay parity with TK-12 • Need to consider ideal number of adults in TK classrooms. • Need programs for working professionals, and programs tailored to Family Child Care. • Difficulty recruiting enough teachers slows the growth of programs.	Support providers who are interested in working with more 0-to-3-year-olds with **training** and other supports. Promote models like EDvance College's B.A. in Early Childhood program that are **tailored to working ECE professionals**. Reduce mandatory open days to make **more time available for teacher development.**
Mental Models	
System does not welcome early educators, and experienced early educators who want to teach but do not have time to get credential. Are TK and PreK classes **developmentally appropriate**? • Need to consider qualifications of classroom teachers (Kinder-5th) who move into TK. • Are educators prepared to work with new age groups? Is adequate professional development available?	**Opportunity to combine the best of ECE and TK/K** through peer learning across UPK system. As written in the *California Master Plan for Early Learning and Care*: "Ensure **equitable treatment of all children**, including dual language learners and children with disabilities, and **eliminate bias through practices and training**."

High Quality Pre-K: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Challenges (Current Reality)	Opportunities (Desired Future Reality)
Patterns of Behavior	
Curriculum: Learning trajectories in literacy and math are not adequately covered in ECE prep programs. **Instruction:** More children with disabilities and special needs.	**Curriculum:** Partner with community colleges to revise curriculum class. **Instruction:** Help teachers understand the intentionality of guiding children playfully and the complexity of what is involved in using this approach.
Structure of the System	
Curriculum: • Lack of curriculum that supports mixed aged learning programs. • Lack of an aligned approach/curriculum for literacy and math that supports dual language learners and meets all of the state and fed requirements. **Instruction:** • Some teachers lack the time, resources, and knowledge to implement developmentally appropriate practices/curriculum. • Challenging to provide ongoing coaching/support with limited funding. • Need time and resources to transform to more research-informed approaches. • State mandates take time away from best, research-based practices. • Difficult to have alignment across publicly-funded and private center-based preschools AND 23 school districts in the county. **Assessment:** • Challenging to have to use the DRDP as the required assessment. • Children are assessed with different tools depending on the UPK setting where they are being served.	**Curriculum:** • Institutions of Higher Education integrate other evidence-based curriculum into their teacher training. • High quality curriculum is paired with coaching that is offered over time in a sustained and consistent manner. • Legislative advocacy is needed to update the definition of TK that states that TK is the 1st year of a two year kindergarten program, and TK follows a modified kindergarten curriculum. **Instruction:** • There should be early intervention in all UPK settings, including FCC. • Need support to create inclusive UPK classrooms, e.g. instructional practices to support children with disabilities. • UPK is delivered in existing high-quality programs. **Assessment:** • Advocacy for changes in how TK 4-year-olds are classified as English Language Learners. The ELPAC is not age appropriate for TK, and perhaps it is not equitable to classify young kids.
Mental Models	
Finding time for training and **shifting the mindset** of some teachers.	**Quality for all** across the Mixed Delivery System. San Mateo County should aim to **set the standard for inclusive education**.

Facilities, Services and Operations

CHALLENGES (CURRENT REALITY)	OPPORTUNITIES (DESIRED FUTURE REALITY)
Patterns of Behavior	
	Braid, blend, and layer funding to create a variety of UPK options in school districts and community-based programs.
Structure of the System	
Financial model: • Revenue is less (due to class sizes) for infants/toddlers vs. classrooms of 3-year-olds vs. 4-year-olds. • Unrealistic to expect FCC providers to have a sustainable financial model based solely on serving younger children. **Family fees:** income eligibility for free or low-cost programs varies by different funding sources. **Funding:** • All TK money is going to districts, cannot subcontract to community-based preschools. • Challenge of paperwork, compliance, eligibility requirements with state contracts. • Only state funding for UPK for Family Child Care is through FCCHEN – no contract in San Mateo County.	**Streamlined eligibility** for CSPP and Head Start. **No fees** for CSPP (not just free in TK). **Developmentally appropriate facilities** for TK.
Mental Models	
TK is seen by providers as **competition** rather than one among many options for families.	Coherence of UPK mixed delivery system with infant/toddler system. Class size is not a static concept - class size based on the needs of the children enrolled at a given time is an important concept.

Promising Practices

During the planning process, speakers presented on programs and research on UPK with the objective of informing the planning committee of local, regional, state, and national **promising practices that can support UPK**. Below is a list of promising practices that were covered under each planning focus area. Information and data shared by presenters is also detailed in Appendix 2.

Community Engagement and Partnerships with a Focus on Equity

- Effective communications campaigns: Steps to Success Campaign by Santa Clara County Office of Education
- Centering English Learners: SEALS's P-3 Framework for principles and aligned practices to support dual language learners across systems from ages 3 to 8.
- Child Care Resource and Referral: Referral Services, Alternative Payment Program, 4Cs Parent Survey and Provider Focus Groups
- Ravenswood City School District: Understanding our Families' ECE Needs
- San Jose Public Library's Early Education Program

Workforce Recruitment and Professional Learning

Workforce Recruitment

- Ravenswood City School District obtained an Early Education Teacher Development Grant (EETDG) to support a workforce pipeline for ECE. They are partnering with Reach University for staff to participate in a B.A. program and to obtain a teaching credential paid for through the grant.
- The Golden State Teacher Grant Program could be a resource for ECE teachers seeking teaching credentials.
- Clackamas Community College offers an Associate's degree program with options in Spanish.
- School District school-based models i.e. "grow your own": San Carlos School District (SCSD) is collaborating with Foothill College to offer ECE courses at SCSD. Foothill's ECE apprenticeship program - the classes in the apprenticeship include five ECE Certificate courses.
- SCSD has a partnership with the San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) for residencies and the California State Preschool Program to develop a workforce pipeline.
- Hillsdale High School CTE program: offers Child Development courses – Bring ECE to more high schools. Sequoia Union High School District may be interested in starting a CD CTE pathway.
- First 5 Napa's Florecer program: early childhood mentorship network in high school.
- Expand pipeline through apprenticeships: EDvance is doing outreach to workforce development boards to develop more ECE apprenticeships.
- Navigation is an issue: there are different needs in various communities. EDvance is helping to understand needs and different landscapes for ECE workers and support working professionals.
- Grow-your-own model: Izzi Early Ed (Head Start) is partnering with EDvance to create pipeline development by bridging the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential program with a BA program.
- Partnership opportunity: Libraries are underutilized for workforce development to connect with informal care providers who may be interested in pursuing additional certification or education.

Professional Learning

- Partnering with Higher Ed to leverage research and expertise: SCSD is partnering with Stanford Accelerator for Learning and Stanford Center on Early Childhood on research and for PD.
- At SCSD, UPK Teacher growth and development has entailed:
    - Cross-functional Team of teachers (PS, TK and K) and leaders drive decision making.
    - Developed a P-3 Alignment Task Force to develop goals and actions.
    - Internal expertise is leveraged with Pre-K and TK doing professional learning together.
    - Alignment of common practices: PBIS, culturally responsive practices, Whole Child model, Project Based Learning.

High Quality Pre-K: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Lessons from The Big Lift 2.0

- Pescadero Curriculum Focus:
    - Theme-based curriculum integrated with math & literacy.
    - Scope & sequence for literacy.
    - Credentialed language and literacy specialist embedded multiple half-days/week for small group work.
- Explicit, direct instruction used strategically, in small doses.
- Curriculum alignment w/elementary.
- FluentSeeds / Early Learning Corp - explicit literacy interventions.
- Need to refine, learn from and improve preschool language and literacy pilots. Greater local adaptations are needed, particularly in the area of oral language and dual language learner supports.
- Build on early kinder readiness gains by expanding language and literacy work into K-3 under the science of reading framework.
- Build internal leadership capacity in curriculum & instruction.
- Continue to prioritize deep engagement with data by expanding preschool to third grade integrated data strategy. Explore ways to measure impacts not currently captured.

Lessons on High-Quality Pre-K from Boston Public Schools

- Evidence-based curricula (and decisions), not philosophy.
- Rich content + foundational skills.
- Blend of domain-specific curricula + Boston-created components.
- Teachers paid at parity with K-12.
- Coaching + PD.
- Alignment P-2.

Other Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Resources

- The First Great Eight Curriculum, greatfirsteight.org.
- Teacher–guided playful instruction: lessons from Deborah Stipek at Stanford.
- Development and Research in Early Mathematics Education (DREME) at Stanford.

FACILITIES, SERVICES AND OPERATIONS

- Braiding, Blending and Layering Funds: SMCOE's State Preschool Manager shared scenarios for UPK offerings using combinations of LEA/TK, CSPP, Head Start, Expanded Learning Opportunities Program, and licensed centers and family child care.

The UPKMD Committee will address the "Facilities, Services, and Operations" focus area in more depth in the second phase of the planning process.

Recommendations and Next Steps

UPKMD in San Mateo County values:

- A true mixed delivery approach with a variety of options for families to ensure that all 3- and 4-year-olds can participate in UPK prior to Kindergarten.
- Building bridges, connections and coherence between programs serving children ages birth to 2, UPK, and before/after school providers.
- An integrated and centralized system for learning about and enrolling in UPK that is clearly communicated to families.
- Teacher preparation and facilities that support developmentally appropriate practices for 3- and 4-year-old children in all UPK settings.
- Streamlined processes for enrollment in UPK programs.
- Early intervention and inclusion in all UPK settings.
- Increased public funding to realize a high-quality, affordable, UPK Mixed Delivery System.

Recommendations

Based on the challenges, opportunities, and promising practices explored by the UPKMD Committee, as well as local, state and national data on the needs of children, families, and the UPK workforce, the Committee has crafted **initial recommendations** to support the implementation of Universal PreKindergarten for all 3- and 4-year olds in San Mateo County. The eleven recommendations are organized by Focus Area and are not listed in priority order.

Community Engagement and Partnerships With a Focus on Equity

Recommendation 1A - Community Engagement: Prioritize involving families and providers in UPKMD design and implementation. Strategies to support this recommendation:

- Identify meaningful opportunities for family and UPK provider engagement with UPK planning.
- Support UPKMD provider peer learning through an ongoing collaborative (UPKMD Committee 2.0), and invite 4Cs Provider Focus Group participants to attend UPKMD Committee 2.0 Meetings.
- Regularly communicate with UPK providers in **multiple** languages (Spanish and Chinese being top priority) regarding the evolution of UPK in San Mateo County and how they can participate.
- Support community-level UPK Collaboratives (i.e. Ravenswood ECE Collaborative).

Recommendation 1B - Community Partnerships: Foster a culture that promotes partnerships among all UPK providers –including Private Preschool, Family Child Care, Head Start, State Preschool, After School, and School Districts – to support UPK implementation that meets child and family needs. Strategies to support this recommendation:

- Support partnerships between School Districts and UPK providers to increase access to before/after school and out-of-school time care, including addressing transportation issues between District and care provider, and leveraging Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP) funds. Private UPK providers need to understand School District TK plans so that they can refine their businesses plans.
- Support relationship building among UPKMD providers to drive collaboration and partnerships.

- Foster partnerships, including with Golden Gate Regional Center, SELPA, and School Districts, which increase inclusion of children with disabilities or delays, and early intervention services in all UPKMD settings with the goal of San Mateo County setting the standard for inclusive education.
- Identify resources and partnerships to create a centralized access point for families (with eligibility/waitlist) for subsidized UPK programs.

Recommendation 1C - Communications: Develop and implement a communications plan that informs families, UPK providers and Community about UPKMD options in a centralized, clear manner. Strategies to support this recommendation:

- Improve information dissemination and navigation for UPK options and considerations (e.g. providers, programs, child development, etc.) that provides support on choosing the best option for a child through various communication media, such as a summary document of UPK options for families **in many languages** and an online UPK portal for families and providers.
- Leverage and maximize use of existing child care resource and referral services offered by 4Cs.
- Provide tools to school districts and parent groups to easily share information on UPK options.
- Raise awareness of UPK providers on options so they can better inform families.
- Engage in multiple forms of outreach, including online Q&A sessions and written communications, **in multiple languages**.
- Identify resources and a lead agency to implement the communications plan.

Workforce Recruitment and Professional Learning

Recommendation 2A – Workforce Recruitment: Support recruitment strategies that address workforce shortages in all UPKMD settings. Strategies to support this recommendation:

- Enhance and promote career navigation services to build a pipeline of new people coming into the field, building from and coordinating existing services at organizations such as San Mateo County Office of Education, San Mateo County Community Colleges, 4Cs, Upward Scholars, JobTrain, NOVAworks, and Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center.
- Develop and implement a communications campaign in **multiple languages** to promote careers in UPKMD settings and promote workforce pathways for current staff to help stabilize and strengthen the workforce.
- Target youth to promote careers in UPKMD settings and promote youth-specific programs in high school for Early Learning workforce development.

Recommendation 2B – Professional Learning: Support degree and credentialing programs, coaching and training for workers in all UPKMD settings that raise instructional quality, provide career growth, promote developmentally appropriate practices, give credit for prior learning/experience, and are accessible to all workers. Strategies to support this recommendation:

- Offer degree and credentialing programs tailored to working professionals, for example programs with virtual or hybrid offerings, job-embedded, evening or weekend hours, and apprenticeship programs.
- Educate the community about the new PK-3 Credential and options for obtaining the credential.

- Align professional development (PD) offerings across UPKMD system (e.g. Pre-K and TK participate in PD together) and make sure all UPK educators can access these offerings.
- Support teachers moving into TK from other grades with PD to support them in educating and caring for younger children, such as developmentally appropriate practices and toileting.
- Provide PD and coaching to support high-quality teacher-child interactions, integrating CLASS assessments into coaching and quality improvement.
- Offer PD and coaching to support creating inclusive UPK classrooms for children with disabilities.

High Quality Pre-K: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Recommendation 3A – Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment: Prioritize implementation of research-based and evidence-validated preschool and TK curricula that support the learning and development of the whole child. Strategies to support this recommendation:

- Promote transition to curricula that align with the recommendations outlined in the National Academies report *A New Vision for High Quality Preschool Curriculum* (2024).[5]
- Work with institutions of higher education to ensure curriculum courses promote research-based, evidence-validated curricula.
- Highlight local best practices through local site visits or videos of local programs.
- Support quality of instruction by supporting effective teacher-child interactions and instructional interactions using CLASS assessment to gather data and coaching to improve teaching strategies.
- Provide information on different curricula for families.
- Refine, learn from, and improve local preschool language and literacy pilots.
- Support the capacity of UPKMD providers to combine observation-based assessment with selective use of direct skills assessment (e.g., math & literacy) to have sufficiently specific information for closing equity-related early achievement gaps, with a focus on 4-year-olds.
- Achieve PreK-to-3rd-Grade alignment by promoting aligned units of study across grade levels with consistent policies and standards across settings.
- Provide technical assistance to UPKMD providers on topics such as **developmentally appropriate practices**, health and safety best practices for young children, toileting, and communication of options to families.

Recommendation 3B – Longitudinal Data: Expand and deepen current preschool to third grade integrated, longitudinal data strategies in order to understand the impact of early childhood education on student outcomes countywide over time, and to use the information for data-driven improvement countywide. Strategies to support this recommendation:

- Utilize the data capacity and infrastructure of The Big Lift to enhance longitudinal data strategies.
- Engage with the work of the California Cradle-to-Career Data System to understand and leverage statewide longitudinal data strategies.
- Provide summaries of longitudinal data to UPKMD providers to drive quality improvement and positively impact student outcomes.

[5] https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/a-new-vision-for-high-quality-pre-k-curriculum

Facilities, Services and Operations

Recommendation 4A – Needs Assessment Data: Share needs assessment data with UPKMD providers to drive program implementation that meets community, family, and child needs. Strategies to support this recommendation:

- Gather data on the schedule of local UPKMD providers (i.e. daily hours, annual calendar, schedule options) and analyze to understand where there may be empty seats and waitlists.
- Share data from parent surveys with UPKMD provider community so they can tailor programs to current family needs.
- Gather data on the before/after school programs available for students in TK, both subsidized and "market rate."
- Based on the needs assessment data and the TK projections, by region, establish a plan to increase state preschool spaces for children in income-eligible families.

Recommendation 4B – Funding: Maximize use of existing funding streams for UPKMD, and increase resources for UPKMD, so that every 3- and 4-year-old has access to a free or affordable UPKMD program of their choice. Strategies to support this recommendation:

- Increase funding to ensure a free UPKMD space for every child from an income-eligible family and to ensure adequate family choice among a variety of options.
- Subsidize UPKMD programs, including both family child care and center-based, to make UPK more affordable for middle-income families.
- Enhance fiscal and administrative technical assistance to UPKMD programs to maximize use of existing resources (i.e. technical assistance on braiding, blending and layering funds).
- Model how implementing a Family Child Care Home Education Network (FCCHEN) would impact family child care providers' time and income to determine feasibility of a local FCCHEN.
- Educate school district CBOs (Chief Business Officers) on how to fully draw down state preschool contracts, with a view to increasing salaries for preschool teachers.

Recommendation 4C – Facilities: Support and enhance existing local efforts to ensure enough high-quality early learning facilities that meet local needs. Strategies to support this recommendation:

- Partner with Build Up San Mateo County, the local organization focused on growing and improving the supply of early care and education facilities, to ensure there are adequate UPKMD facilities in every community in the county.
- Support school districts to provide developmentally appropriate facilities for TK.

In August 2024, an online survey was distributed through the Child Care Partnership Council, 4Cs, and other community partners to seek feedback on how to prioritize the recommendations, and identify missing priorities. See Appendix 6 for a full summary of the survey results. One respondent commented, "I am concerned there are too many high priority items and we will have to focus as best as possible on fewer priorities." In the 2024-25 year, the CCPC and UPKMD Committee may want to focus on the following priorities that were ranked most highly by survey respondents:

- 1B - Community Partnerships. 86 of 119 respondents (72%) ranked as "High Priority."
- 1C – Communications. 85 of 118 respondents (72%) ranked as "High Priority."
- 2A – Workforce Recruitment. 85 of 119 respondents (71%) ranked as "High Priority."
- 3A – Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. 90 of 119 respondents (76%) ranked as "High Priority."

- 4B – Funding. 92 of 120 respondents (77%) ranked as "High Priority."
- 4C – Facilities. 84 of 119 respondents (71%) ranked as "High Priority."

Advocacy to Drive UPKMD System Improvement

Recommendation 5A – Advocacy: Develop a UPKMD Policy Platform and advocacy strategy that strengthens the entire UPKMD system. Advocacy priorities include[6]:

  - Increased wages for educators across the UPKMD system, especially those with the lowest incomes.
  - More financial resources to all UPK settings, including family child care and center-based preschool, as UPK expands, and programs adapt to the current environment.
  - Income-eligibility thresholds for subsidized programs that reflect local cost of living, not state median income or federal poverty level.
  - Higher reimbursement rates for serving younger children and children with disabilities.
  - Increased resources for training and materials for providers who want to serve younger children.
  - Credit for prior ECE teaching experience in credentialing programs.
  - More resources to support low ratios across the UPKMD system.[7]

Strategies to support this advocacy strategy include:

- Mobilize UPKMD providers to engage in advocacy to the state through existing organizations such as the Child Care Partnership Council (CCPC), San Mateo County Family Child Care Organization, and Child Care Providers United. Ensure language accessibility is considered when engaging with providers.
- Keep UPK advocacy priorities at the forefront for elected officials at all levels – City Councils, School Boards, County Board of Supervisors, State Assembly and Senate.
- Create a crosswalk between the State's UPK Quality & Access Workgroup and San Mateo County UPKMD recommendations to understand opportunities for state-level systems change.

Next Steps

In the second phase of UPKMD planning, SMCOE and the CCPC will continue to convene a UPKMD collaborative, and create clear pathways for families and UPK providers to continue to engage in UPK planning. The recommendations in this report will be evaluated for their ease of implementation, and in light of the feedback from the August 2024 community survey:

- Low Effort = can be accomplished with existing resources and staffing;
- Medium Effort = requires a lead agency/staff and moderate level of new resources;
- High Effort = requires significant new resources and partnerships to accomplish.

The collaborative will also review the recommendations to identify lead and supporting organizations and staff. The collaborative will elaborate and refine the strategies to support the recommendations. The collaborative should review the results of the August 2024 community

[6] Advocacy priorities have been put in priority order based on the responses from the August 2024 community survey. See Appendix 6.
[7] The National Association for the Education of Young Children recommends ratios of no more than 10 children to 1 adult in preschool settings.

survey summarized in Appendix 6 to ensure community feedback is reflected in the priorities. The collaborative will also continue to engage in peer learning, as well as engage with experts, to stay current on UPK promising practices.

Appendix 1: Acknowledgements

Thank you to the members of the UPKMD Committee:

Alara Guzman
Alice Kuo
Amira Elmukhtar
Angelina Ibarra
Ann Waterman Roy
Brianti Williams
Carol Thomsen
David Fleishman
Diana Harlick
Donna Yuriar
Erica Ramos
Hayley Village
Jenna Wachtel Pronovost
Jennifer Frentress
Jennifer Pifileti
Joy Irani
Karen Haas-Foletta
Karen Pace
Karina Garcia-Barbera
Katy Bradford Arvey
Lisa Cunningham
Liz Scully
Lori Ottolini Geno
Maggie Barrientos
Marchelle Moten
Margaret Shinoki
Michelle Blakely
Nicole Willard
Ronda White
Roselle Loudon
Sara Gassner-Wollwage
Sarah Kinahan
Serra Vaka
Sheryl Chan
Soodie Ansari
Tal Tamir
Victoria Ann Shoemaker
Victoria Coverson-Baxter

Thank you to Wendy Dougherty, Consulting for Results, for providing meeting facilitation and support services to the UPKMD Committee, and for helping to write and edit this report.

Thank you to Rosemarie Pozzobon and the whole Administrative Assistant team in P-3 & Early Learning Services at the San Mateo County Office of Education for supporting the meeting logistics of the UPKMD Committee.

Appendix 2: Research and Reference Materials

General Resources and Research on UPK

1. California's UPK Website
2. California Department of Education's UPK resources website with communications toolkit
3. U.S. Dept. of Education Letter on Mixed Delivery for Preschool Approaches and Federal Funds for Preschool
4. California Master Plan for Early Learning and Care
5. McKinsey & Company article: Expanding Publicly Funded Pre-K: How to do it and do it well.
6. K12 Dive: Hawaii Outlines Plan for 465 more Pre-K classrooms by 2032
7. Stanford Accelerator for Learning: State Policymakers attend academy hosted by Stanford Center on Early Childhood

Resources by topic area:

Community Engagement and Partnerships With a Focus on Equity

1. Five Steps for State and Community Leaders to Increase Equitable Access to Early Care and Education
2. Policy Equity Group: Universal Pre-K only works if states also stabilize infant and toddler care; otherwise, it can be detrimental.
3. WestEd report: Pre-Referral Processes in California State Preschool Programs: How Practitioners Decide to Refer Multilingual Children for Special Education Evaluation
4. KQED: What to Expect When Enrolling Your Child in Transitional Kindergarten (FAQs)

Workforce Recruitment and Professional Learning

1. Universal PreKindergarten Workforce Requirements

High-Quality Pre-K: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

1. National Academies report A New Vision for High Quality Preschool Curriculum (2024)
2. What Sustains the Pre-K Boost? New Evidence from Boston Public Schools
3. Child-centered learning and family engagement: examples from the Boston Public Schools

4. 40 Years After 'A Nation at Risk': The Imperative for High-Quality Pre-K by Deborah Stipek, Dec. 19, 2023

5. UPK Curriculum Guidance for Programs Serving 4-Year-Old Children by CDE Early Learning Division

6. UC San Diego Magazine: "New Vistas in Learning" Researchers Dig into the Science of Education regarding Early Learning

7. SEAL P3 Framework for Centering English Learners

8. Blog post on TK and English Language Proficiency Assessments

9. The Effect of Early Childhood Programs on Third-Grade Test Scores: Evidence from Transitional Kindergarten in Michigan

Facilities, Services, and Operations

1. Including Family Child Care Homes in Publicly-Funded Pre-K Programs: Estimating the Cost of Supporting Quality

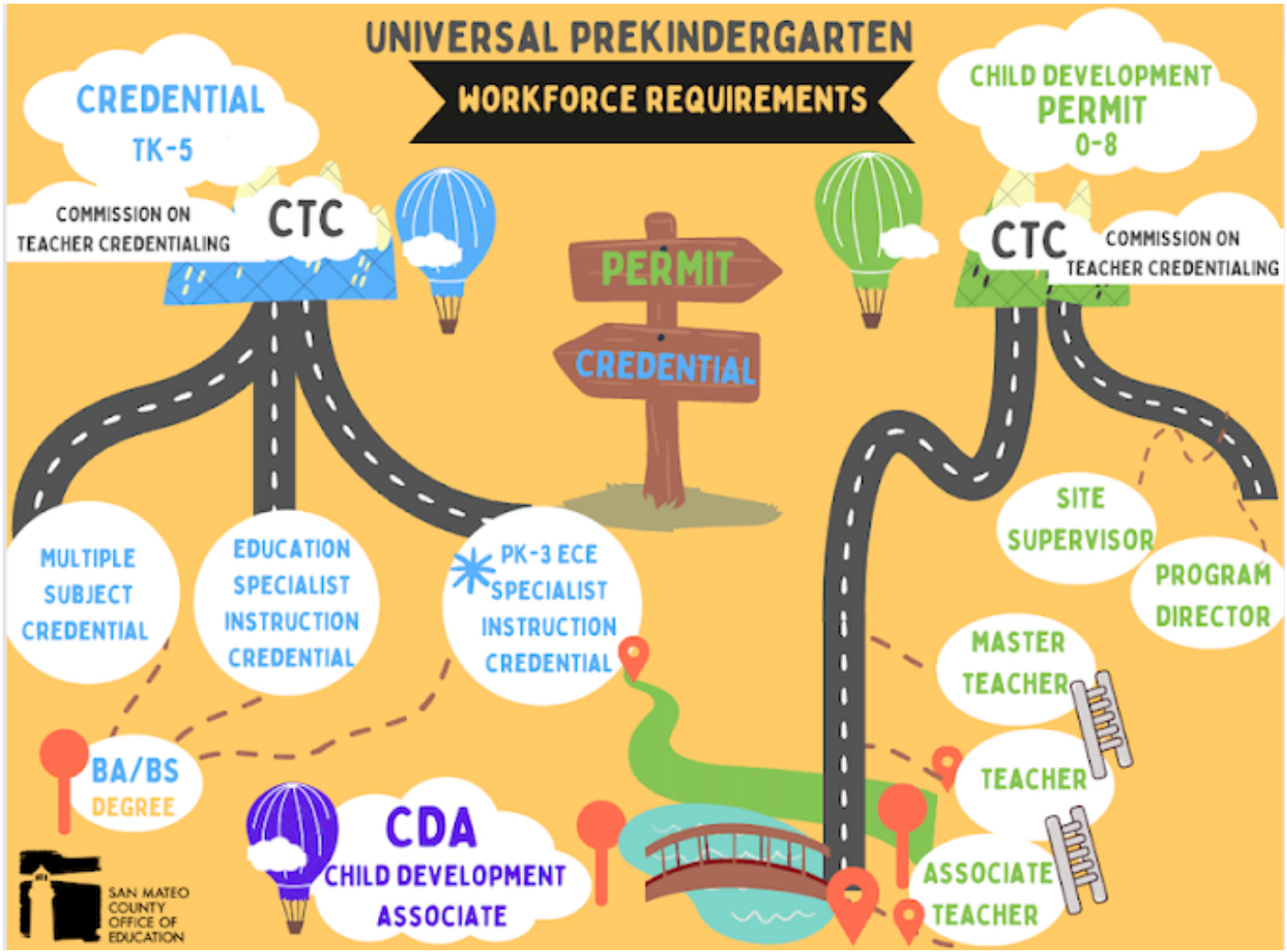
2. FCCHEN memo on contract types and rates

3. The Daily Journal: Child care operators being hit on all sides in San Mateo County

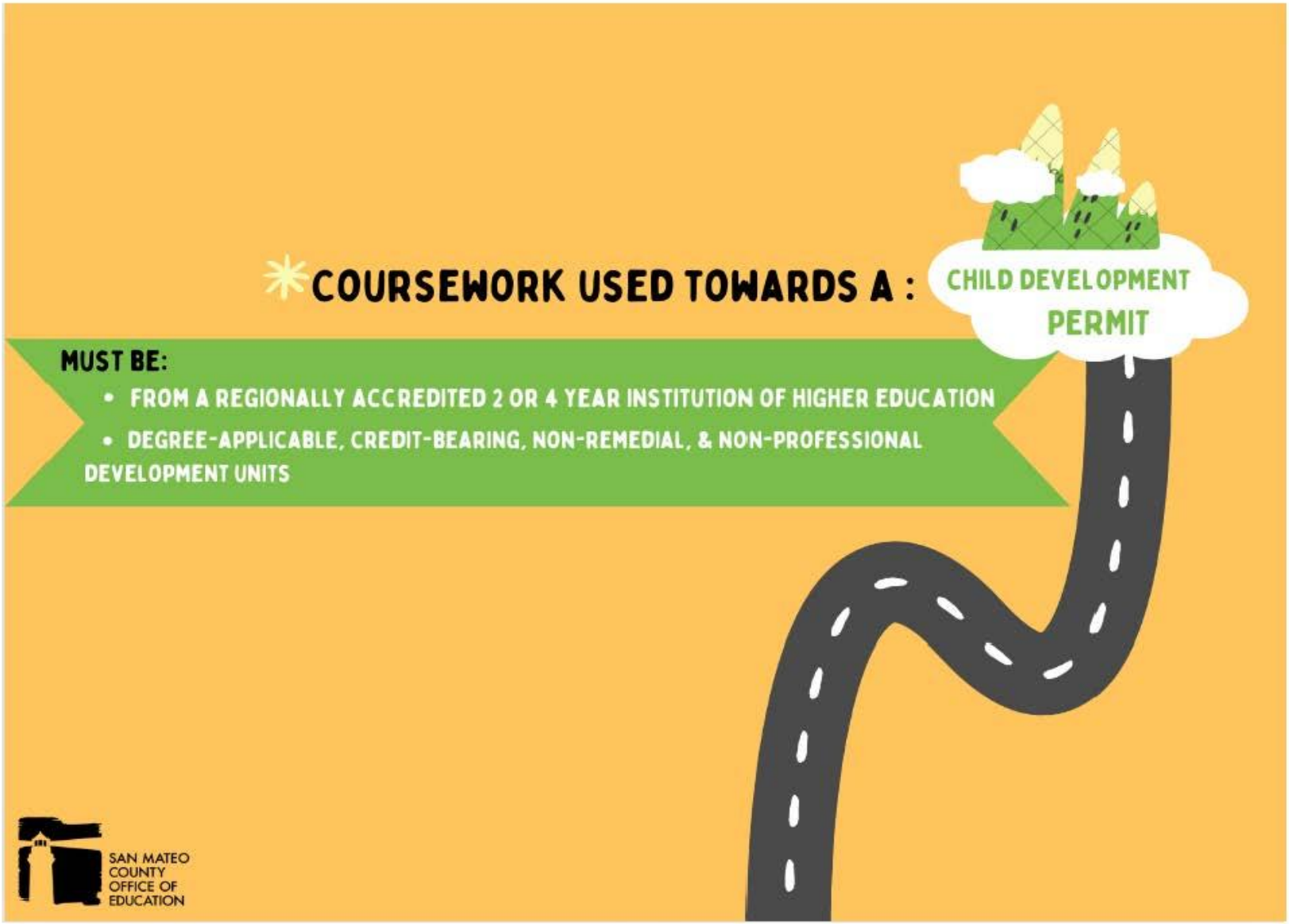
Appendix 3: UPK Workforce Requirements, Pathways Diagrams, and Grant Opportunities

These visuals were created by SMCOE's ECE Career Pathways Specialist, Sara Gassner-Wollwage.

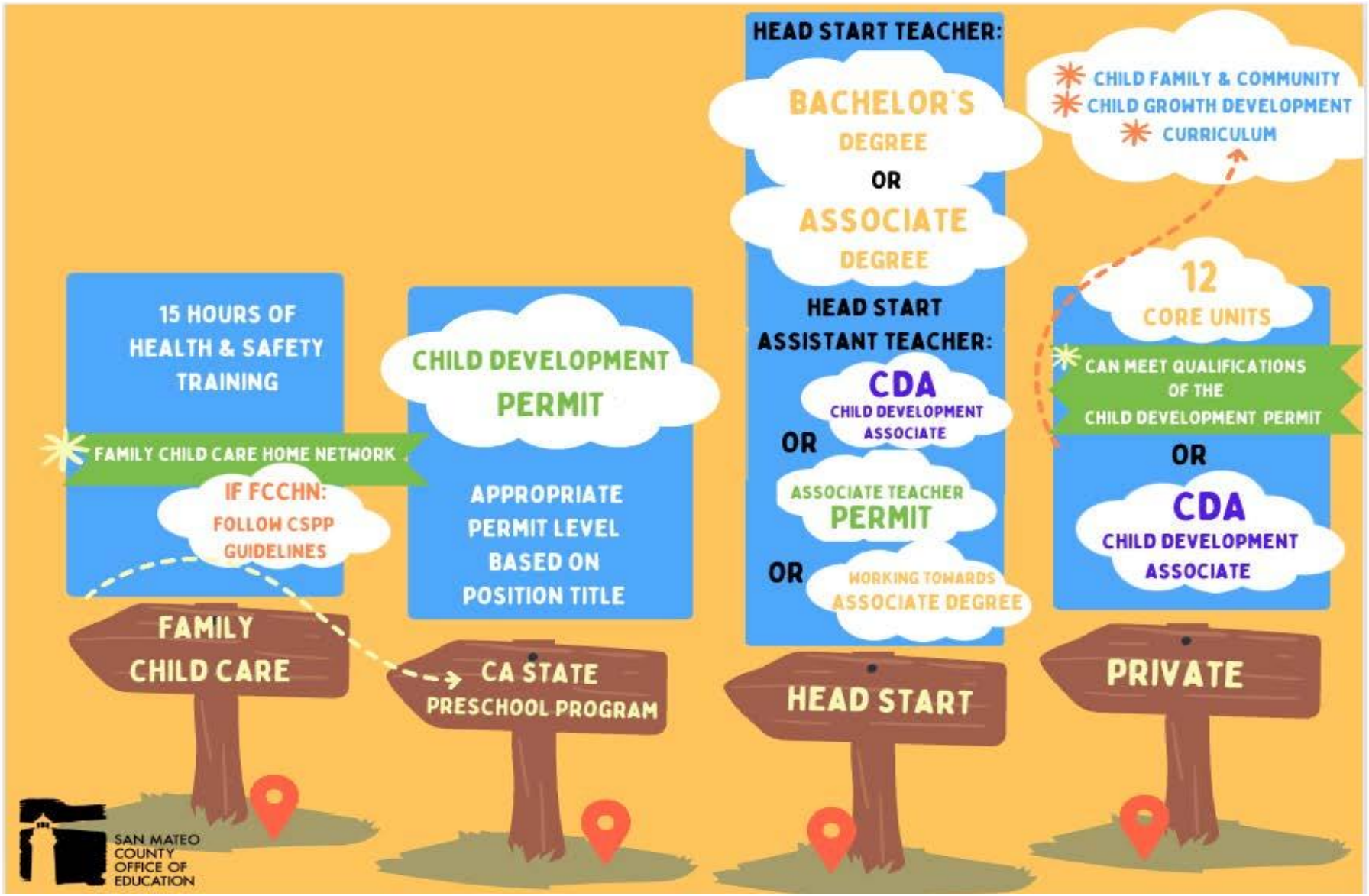
UPK Workforce Requirements: Credentials and Permits



Coursework Applicable to Child Development Permit



Summary of Credentialing, Degree, and Training Requirements in Different UPK Settings



Pathways to Becoming a TK Teacher



Pathways to Becoming a Special Education Teacher



Workforce Grant Opportunities

The San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) has compiled resources for prospective educators on their website. A listing of grant opportunities can be found at: https://www.smcoe.org/for-communities/programs/teach-san-mateo-county.html.

SMCOE also administers the Early Learning and Care Stipend Program. This program offers an annual monetary stipend for educators working in child care and preschool settings who complete either college coursework or professional development. More about the ELC Teacher Stipend can be found at: https://www.smcoe.org/for-educators/early-educators-and-providers/elcstipend/

Appendix 4 – 4Cs Report: UPK Parent Survey Findings



Presentation Contents



1. Introduction
2. Respondent Overview
3. Survey Findings
4. Key Takeaways

NOTICE: These materials are owned by 4Cs of San Mateo County. They may not be copied, distributed, or edited without express written consent. Unauthorized use, reproduction, or distribution of this material, in whole or in part, is strictly prohibited.

Introduction



Survey Purpose

- This survey was developed by Child Care Coordinating Council (4Cs) to capture perspectives of families in order to inform the planning and development of an early learning system in San Mateo County.
- This is part of an effort led by the Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Mixed Delivery Planning Committee, under the direction of San Mateo County's Child Care Partnership Council (CCPC), with the goal of developing a plan that ensures all four-year-olds and high-need three-year-olds in San Mateo County have access to high quality, full-day early learning programs.

NOTICE: These materials are owned by 4Cs of San Mateo County. They may not be copied, distributed, or edited without express written consent. Unauthorized use, reproduction, or distribution of this material, in whole or in part, is strictly prohibited.

UPK Parent Survey

- There were 338 total survey respondents with children ages 0-5 across English and Spanish versions of the survey
  - There were 260 respondents for the English version and 78 respondents for the Spanish version
- Responses were collected between March 22 - April 19, 2024
- The survey was distributed via email

NOTICE: These materials are owned by 4Cs of San Mateo County. They may not be copied, distributed, or edited without express written consent. Unauthorized use, reproduction, or distribution of this material, in whole or in part, is strictly prohibited.

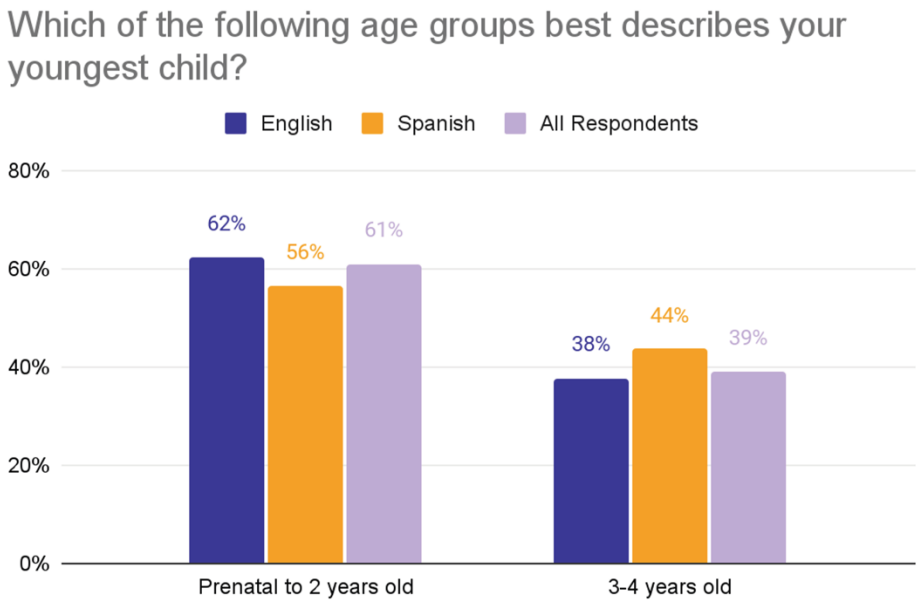
Respondent Overview

In the following slides, results are shown by survey version. The legend indicates whether respondents responded to the English version or Spanish version, or if results have been combined for respondents of both surveys (Overall)



Ages of Children

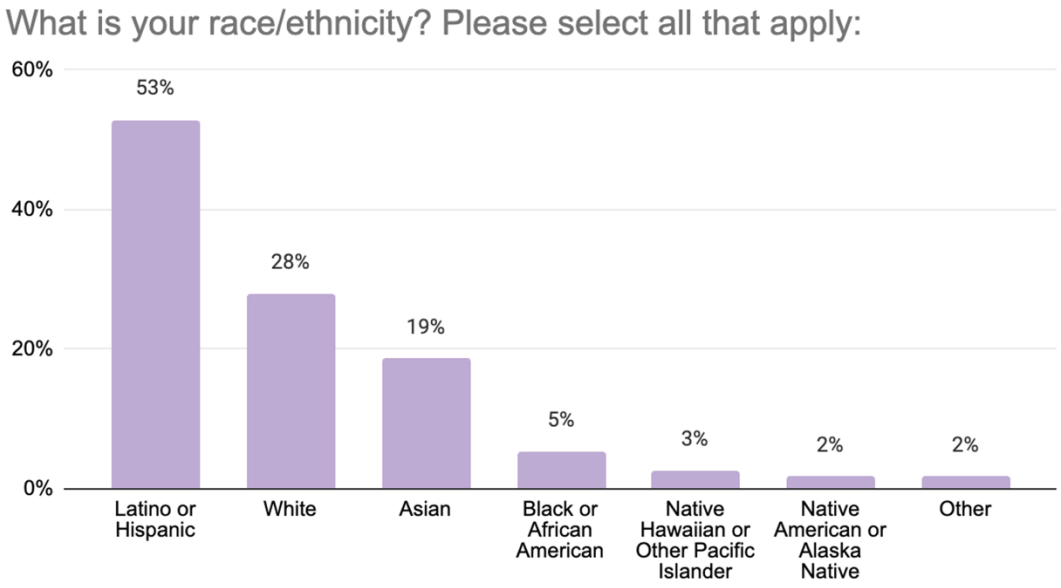
For most respondents, their youngest child is prenatal to 2 years old.



n = 260 for English survey respondents; 78 for Spanish survey respondents; 338 overall

Race/Ethnicity

Most respondents, including nearly all Spanish survey respondents (98%), are Latino or Hispanic.

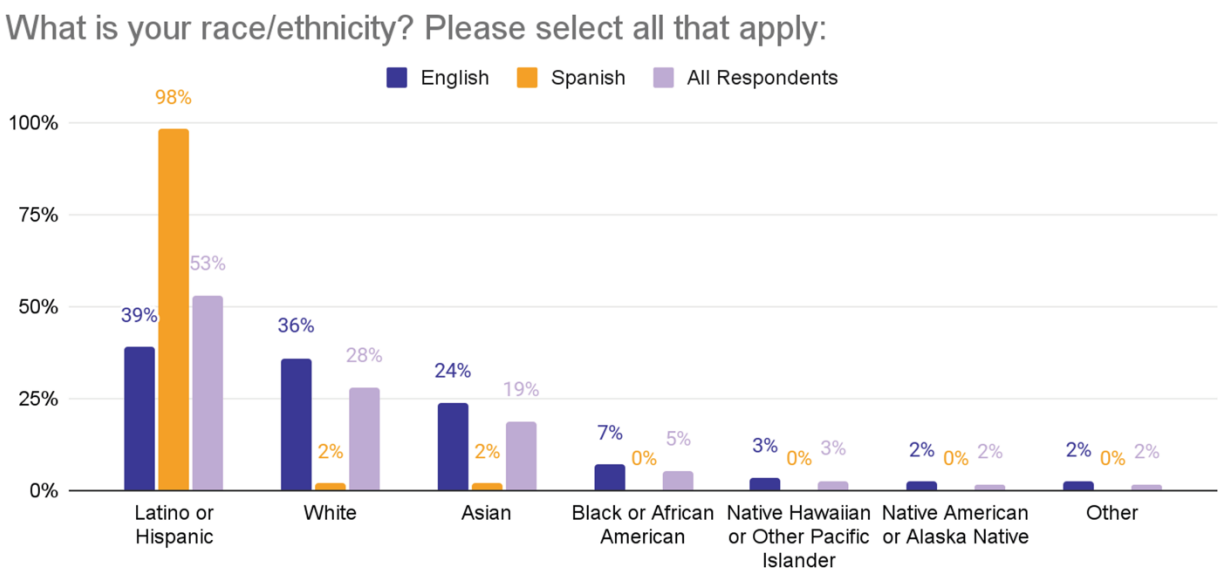


n =225

Respondents who selected "Other" provided the following specifications: Brazilian, Middle Eastern

Race/Ethnicity

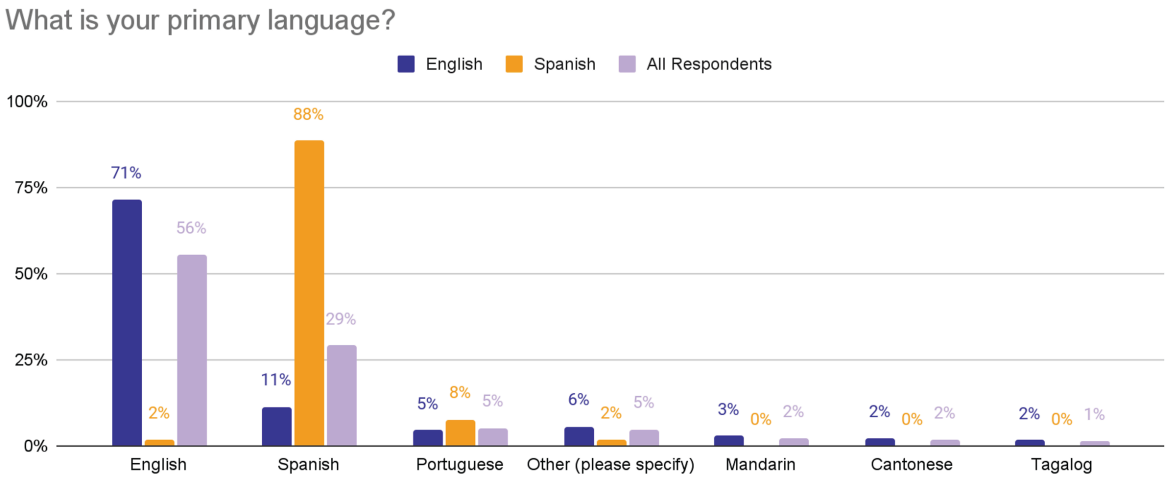
Most respondents across both survey versions, including nearly all Spanish survey respondents (98%), are Latino or Hispanic.



n =172 for English survey respondents; 53 for Spanish survey respondents; 225 overall Respondents who selected "Other" provided the following specifications: Brazilian, Middle Eastern

Primary Language

Aside from English and Spanish, the next most common primary languages spoken by survey respondents are Portuguese and Other.

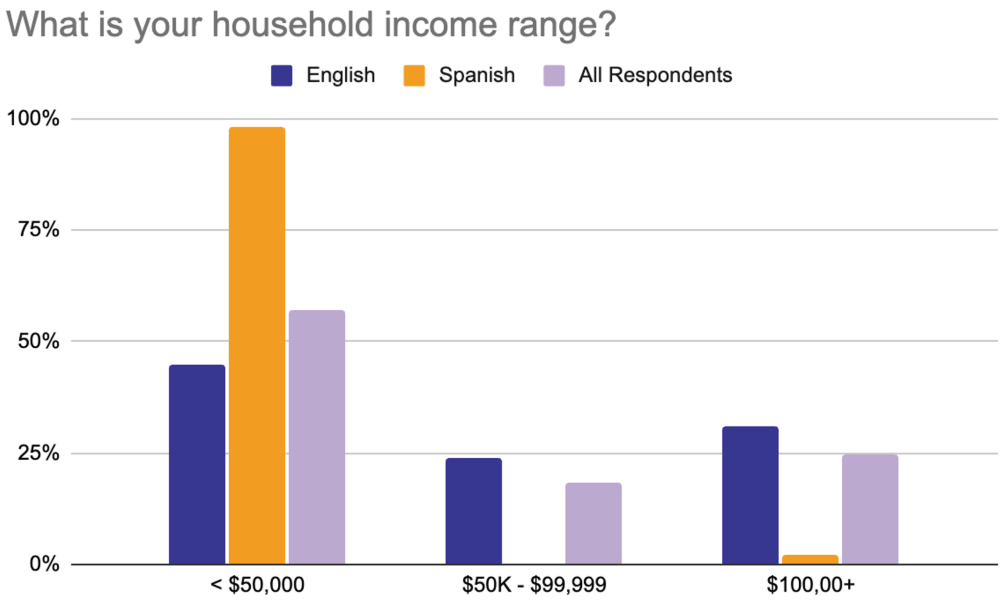


n =175 for English survey respondents; 52 for Spanish survey respondents; 227 total
Respondents who selected "Other" provided the following specifications: Arabian, Arabic, Bulgarian, English and Spanish, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Russian, Russian and Georgian, Ukrainian

Household Income

The household income for most (57%) of all respondents is **less than $50,000**.

This is true for 98% of Spanish survey respondents.



n =172 for English survey respondents; 52 for Spanish survey respondents; 224 total

Findings

In the following slides, results are shown by survey version. The legend indicates whether respondents responded to the English version or Spanish version, or if results have been combined for respondents of both surveys (Overall)



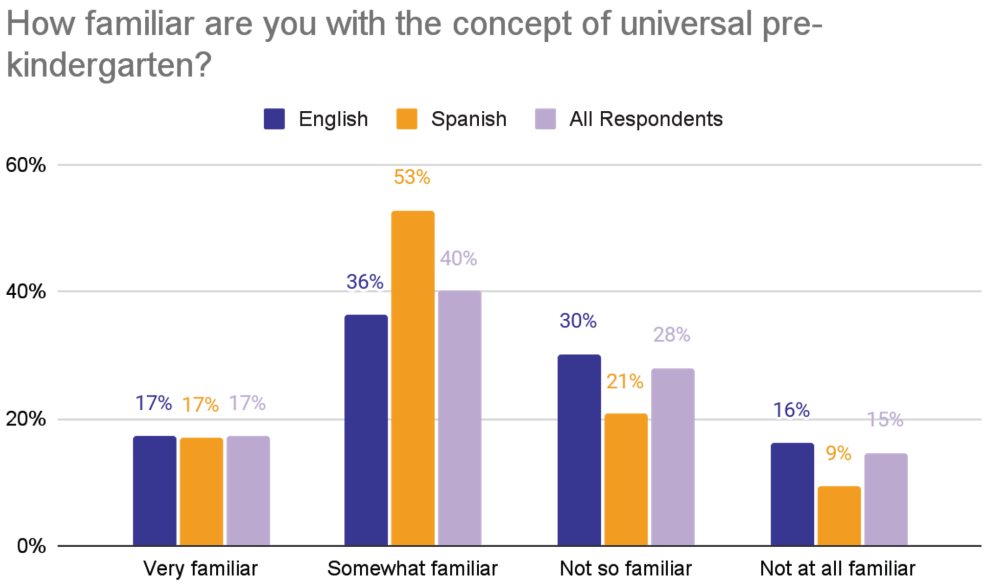
Familiarity with UPK



Familiarity with UPK

Most respondents (57%) are somewhat or very familiar with the concept of UPK.

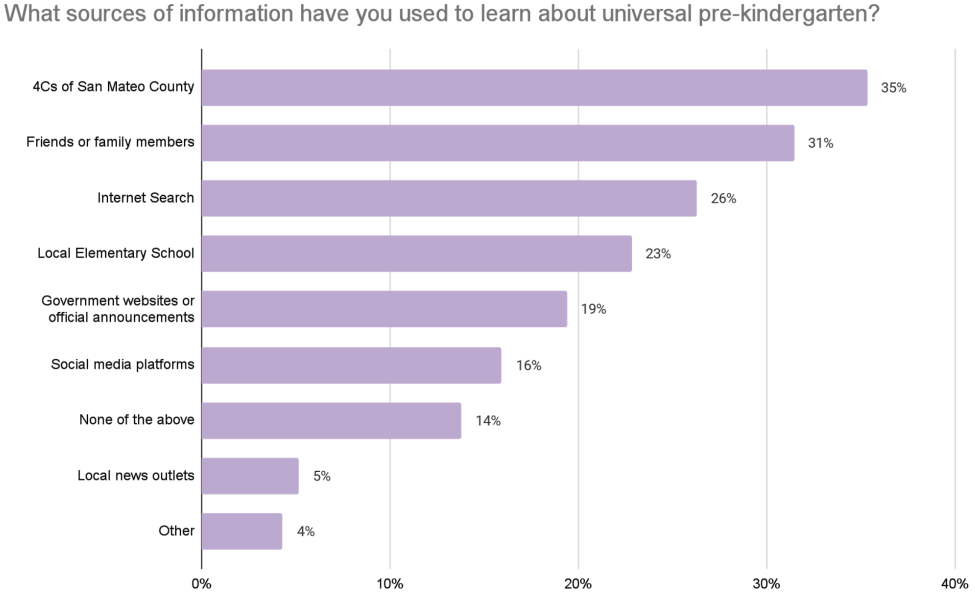
Compared to English survey respondents, a higher percentage of Spanish survey respondents are somewhat or very familiar with UPK.



n =179 for English survey respondents; 53 for Spanish survey respondents; 232 total

Familiarity with UPK

The most common source of information about UPK is **4Cs of San Mateo County**, followed by friends or family members and internet search.



n =232

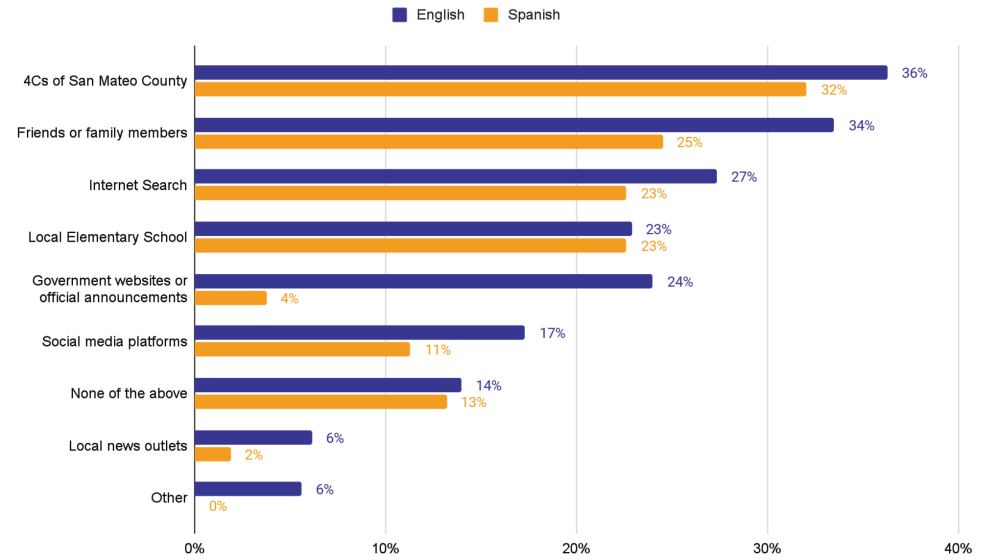
Respondents who selected "Other" provided the following specifications: personal experience/education, being a teacher/preschool teacher, pediatrician and mental health therapist, my preschool, school, dental office

Familiarity with UPK

There is alignment on the most common sources of UPK information for English and Spanish survey respondents.

One exception is that the percentage of respondents who learn about UPK through government websites or official announcements is 20 percentage points higher for English versus Spanish survey respondents.

What sources of information have you used to learn about universal pre-kindergarten?



n =179 for English survey respondents; 53 for Spanish survey respondents; 232 total

Respondents who selected "Other" provided the following specifications: personal experience/education, being a teacher/preschool teacher, pediatrician and mental health therapist, my preschool, school, dental office

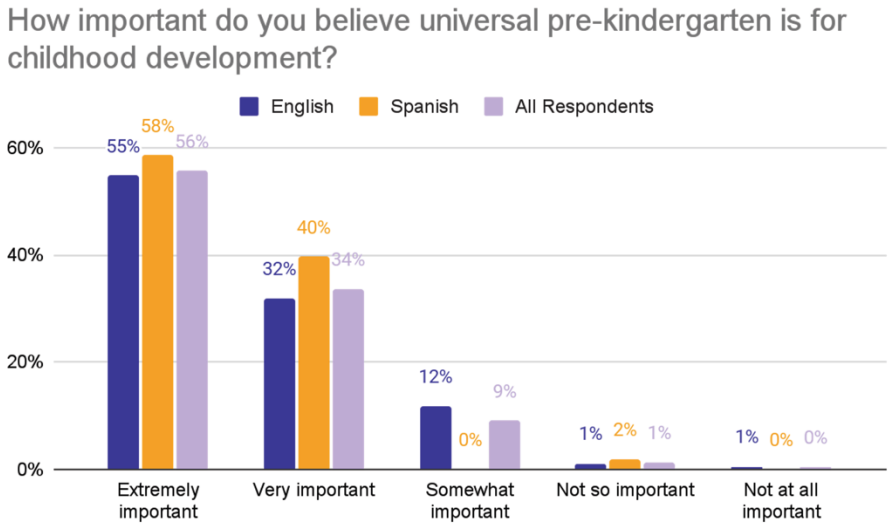
Family Priorities



Family Priorities

90% of all respondents believe UPK is very or extremely important for childhood development.

That percentage is even higher (98%) for Spanish survey respondents.

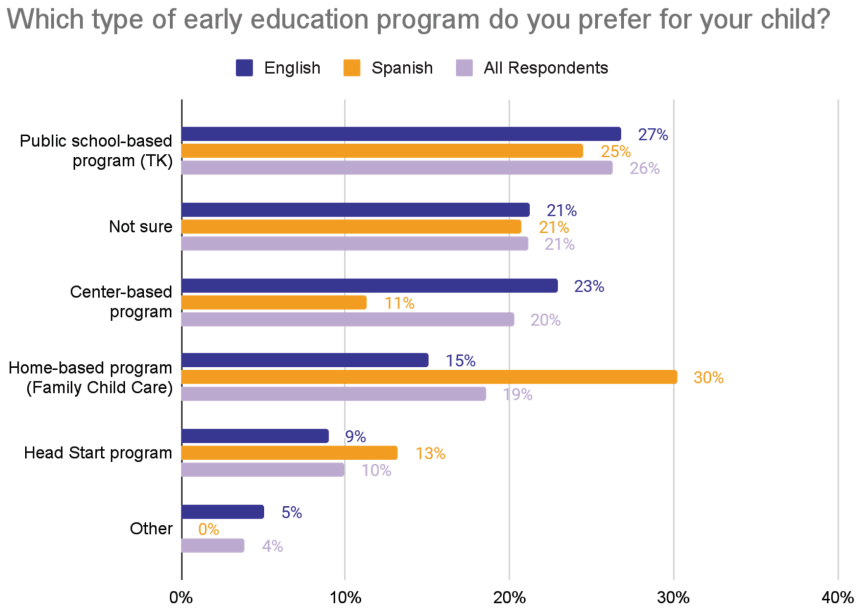


n =179 for English survey respondents; 53 for Spanish survey respondents; 232 total

Family Priorities

Overall, preferences for early learning programs were mixed, with the most preferred being public school-based programs (TK).

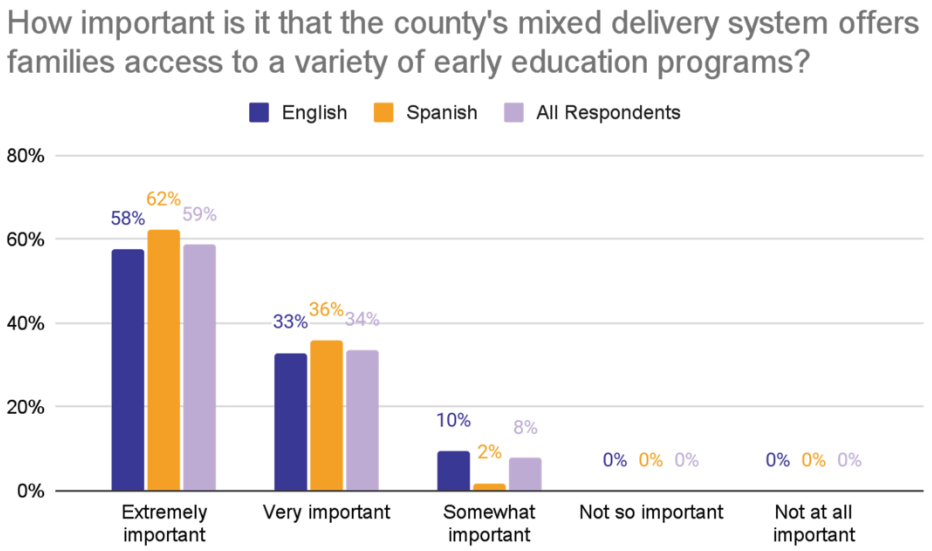
For Spanish survey respondents, home-based programs are most preferred.



n =179 for English survey respondents; 53 for Spanish survey respondents; 232 total
Respondents who selected "Other" provided the following specifications: center-based or Head Start, Faith based, home care for children younger than 3 years old, all/any options, parent co-op preschool, year-round center not run by school district that offers speech and OT services.

Family Priorities

A majority of all survey respondents feel it is **extremely** important that the county's mixed delivery systems offer families access to a variety of early education programs.



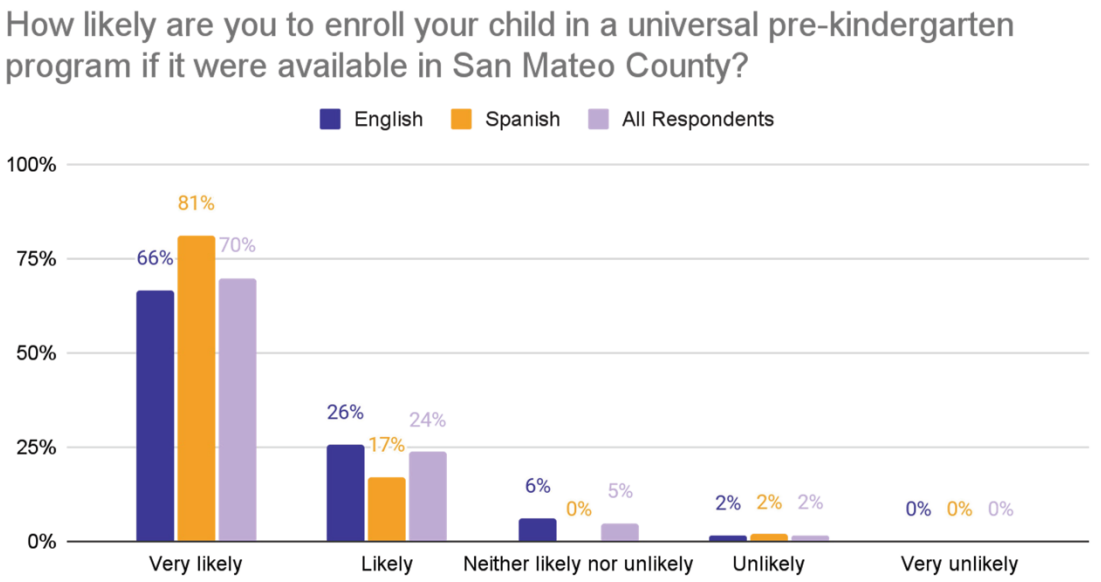
n =179 for English survey respondents; 53 for Spanish survey respondents; 232 total

Pre-K Preferences



Pre-K Preferences

94% of all survey respondents are likely or very likely to enroll their child in a UPK program if it were available.



n =179 for English survey respondents; 53 for Spanish survey respondents; 232 total

2024 23

Pre-K Preferences

Families ranked the factors below in the following order of importance when choosing a pre-kindergarten program for their child.

1. Quality of education/curriculum (Avg rank=2.0)
2. Location/proximity to home or work (Avg rank=2.6)
3. Cost/affordability (Avg rank=2.9)
4. Teacher-to-child ratio (Avg rank=3.7)
5. Facilities/resources (Avg rank=4.6)
6. Inclusivity and diversity (Avg rank=5.2)

Note:

n =232

The average rank order was the same for English and Spanish survey respondents.

Each respondent ranked the above factors from 1-6, with 1 being the most important and 6 being the least important.

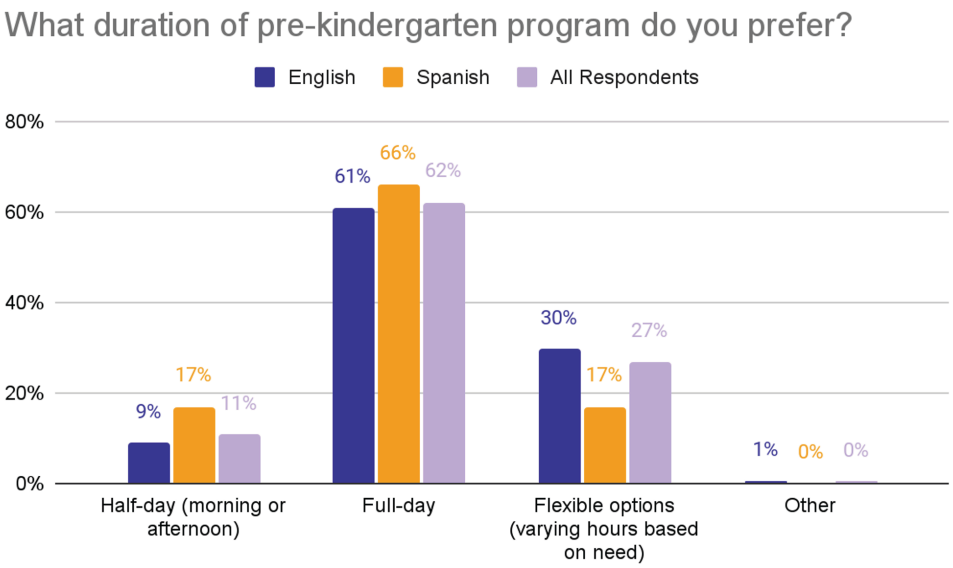


Pre-K Preferences

Most survey respondents (62%) prefer full-day Pre-K.

This is 35 percentage points* higher than the next most common preference, flexible options.

*31 percentage points for English respondents and 49 percentage points for Spanish respondents



n =179 for English survey respondents; 53 for Spanish survey respondents; 232 total
Respondents who selected "Other" provided the following specifications: 3-4 day a week options with the option to do half day or full day as needed based on parent schedule

Pre-K Preferences

Families ranked the factors below in the following order of importance for the pre-kindergarten program to focus on:

1. Social and emotional development (Avg rank=1.8)
2. Academic readiness (Avg rank=2.5)
3. Physical activity and health (Avg rank=3.0)
4. Creative expression and arts* (Avg rank=3.8)
5. Bilingual education/language development* (Avg rank=3.9)

**For Spanish survey respondents, Bilingual education/language development was the 4th highest ranked and Creative expression and arts was the 5th highest ranked, on average.*

Note:

n =179 for English survey respondents; 53 for Spanish survey respondents; 232 total

Each respondent ranked the above factors from 1-5, with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important.

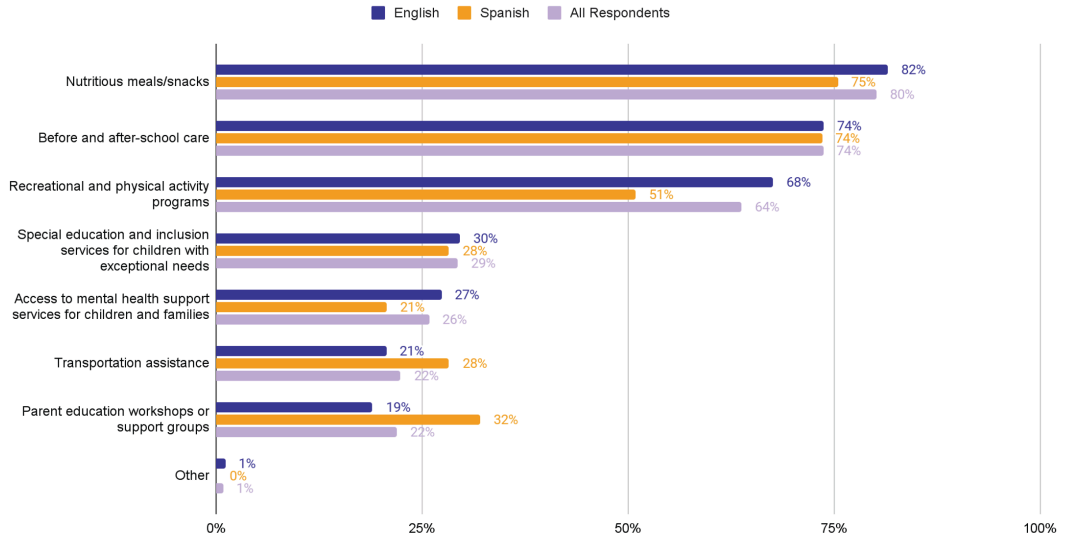


Pre-K Preferences

The most preferred additional services are nutritious meals/snacks, before and after-school care, and recreational and physical activity programs.

For Spanish survey respondents, parent education workshops and transportation assistance is are more commonly preferred than for English respondents.

Please select your top three preferred additional services to be offered alongside pre-kindergarten education:



n =179 for English survey respondents; 53 for Spanish survey respondents; 232 total
Respondents who selected "Other" provided the following specifications: be able to choose my own private preschool, play-based learning

Suggestions and Considerations for UPK Implementation





Long Answer Survey Questions:

1. What suggestions do you have for ensuring equitable access to universal pre-kindergarten programs across different communities within San Mateo County?
2. Are there any specific cultural or community considerations that you believe should be incorporated into the design and implementation of universal pre-kindergarten programs in San Mateo County?
3. Please feel free to share any additional thoughts you have on how to best implement universal pre-kindergarten in San Mateo County. This could include your concerns, expectations, or topics you would like to know more about.

The following slides summarize themes from parents' responses to the long answer survey questions. Please note the following:

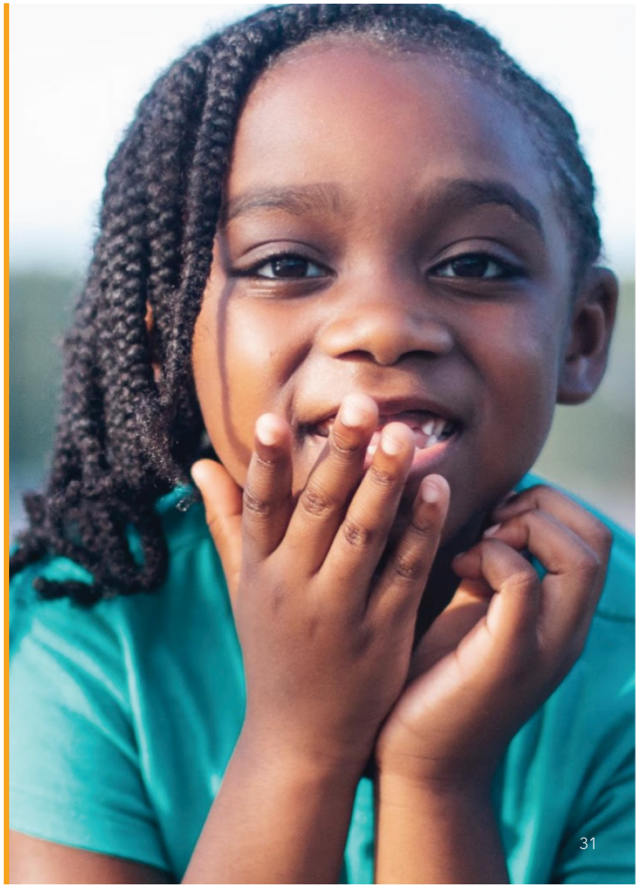
- Responses to each survey question are reported for all respondents and also broken out by language (English survey respondents vs. Spanish survey respondents).
- For each question, VIVA categorized responses by theme. The number of parents who mentioned each theme is included in parenthetical enclosures. Some responses mentioned multiple themes, so they are counted more than once.
- If a respondent did not answer the question (e.g., 'NA', 'none', or 'good idea') then it was excluded from the analysis.

1. Suggestions for ensuring equitable access to UPK programs:

All respondents

- Affordable for all families (23)
- Outreach initiatives to raise awareness about options and resources (10)
- Hours that meet families' needs (7)
- Families able to choose options that meet their needs (6)
- Prioritize families who meet certain eligibility criteria (6)
- Inclusion of diverse languages, cultures and racial identities (5)
- Locations that meet families' needs (4)
- High quality options (5)
- Family engagement opportunities (2)
- Funding availability (2)
- Workforce support (2)
- Easy application process (2)
- More programs (1)

For a complete list of responses, please see the compiled open text responses



31

2. Cultural or community considerations to include in the design and implementation of UPK:

All respondents

- Offer bilingual and immersion programs (12)
- Celebrate and learn about cultural diversity (11)
- Affordable for all families (5)
- Diversity in terms of child and workforce demographics (5)
- High quality options (5)
- Offer tailored support to children and families (4)
- Communicate with parents who do not speak English (2)
- Offer outdoor and extracurricular activities (2)
- Hours availability (2)
- Include children of all abilities (1)
- Community engagement to shape programs (1)
- Families able to choose options that meet their needs (1)
- Access to mental and social emotional resources (1)
- Teach sign language (1)
- Teach religion (1)

For a complete list of responses, please see the compiled open text responses



3. Additional thoughts on implementing UPK, including concerns, expectations, or topics you would like to know more about:

All respondents

- High quality options (12)
- Families able to choose options that meet their needs (8)
- Affordable for all families (6)
- Outreach to raise awareness about options and resources (3)
- Support English language learners (3)
- Desire for help from 4Cs (3)
- Hours that meet families' needs (2)
- Celebrate and learn about cultural diversity (2)
- Diversity of children represented at programs (2)
- Appreciation of work to support families (2)
- Locations that meet families' needs (1)
- Engage families in the planning process (1)
- Funding availability (1)
- Workforce support (1)
- Support for children with learning delays (1)

For a complete list of responses, please see the compiled open text responses



37

Key Takeaways



Key Takeaways:

Mixed Delivery: There are a range of preferences for different types of early education programs, and families are aligned on the importance of family choice for a variety of early education programs.

Interest in UPK: Families shared a high level of interest in enrolling their children in UPK programs, particularly full-day programs.

Quality: Families value the quality of education/curriculum, and are particularly focused on social and emotional development.

Affordability: Families expressed the importance of affordability when selecting an early education program and for equitable access to UPK programs.

Outreach: Families need more information about early learning options and resources.

Linguistic and Cultural Diversity: Families want inclusive programs and access to bilingual and Spanish Language programs.



Thank you!

Please reach out with any questions:

4csresourceandreferral@sanmateo4cs.org

Appendix 5 – 4Cs Report: Provider Insights on UPK Implementation

VIVA social impact partners

4Cs of San Mateo County

Provider Insights on UPK Implementation - Summary Report

VIVA Social Impact Partners | May 2024



Contents

Executive Summary **3**
Introduction **5**
Background 5
Methodology 6
Key Findings **7**
Impacts of Transitional Kindergarten 7
Concerns 7
Adapting to TK 8
Desired Supports 8
Perspectives on Family Child Care Home Education Networks (FCCHENs) 10
Concerns 10
Benefits 11
Barriers to Accepting Vouchers 12
Provider Engagement 12
Recommendations **13**
Appendices **17**
Appendix I - Provider Demographics 17
Appendix II - Learning Questions 20
Appendix III - Protocol for FCC Providers 22
Appendix IV - Protocol for Center-based Providers 28

Executive Summary

San Mateo County is developing a plan to ensure that all four-year-olds and high-need three-year-olds have access to high quality full-day early learning programs. Under the direction of the Child Care Partnership Council (CCPC), a group of diverse stakeholders called the Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Mixed Delivery Planning Committee is leading this work. The Committee wanted the perspectives of families and child care providers to shape the planning process, and asked the Child Care Coordinating Council (4Cs), San Mateo County's Resource & Referral agency, to lead community engagement efforts. To reach child care providers, 4Cs asked VIVA Social Impact Partners to facilitate five focus group conversations.

In April 2024, VIVA Social Impact Partners connected with 38 family child care (FCC) providers and 20 center-based providers. Focus groups were held online in English, Spanish, and Mandarin, allowing diverse providers to share their experiences and perspectives. Questions centered on experiences with the rollout of Transitional Kindergarten (TK), perspectives on implementing a Family Child Care Home Education Network (FCCHEN), barriers to accepting children with vouchers, and how providers would like to engage in the planning process going forward. VIVA then analyzed providers' input to identify common themes and inform a set of practical recommendations.

The following summarizes key themes and recommendations that emerged from the focus groups:

1. **Impacts of TK -** The rollout of TK in public schools has impacted many providers' child care businesses. Facing declining enrollment of four year olds, some providers have found creative ways to remain competitive. In contrast, many FCC providers have limited knowledge of the TK rollout in public schools, contributing to uncertainty over how best to adapt.

2. **Support adapting to TK -** Providers shared ideas for how the county could foster a more inclusive mixed delivery system in the wake of the TK rollout. Popular ideas included building partnerships with school districts to provide wrap-around care, facilitating a communications campaign focused on family choice, and subsidizing the cost of other early learning options for middle-income families. Overall, for some providers, it was important that the county focus on making systems-level changes rather than asking individual providers to adapt their offerings.

3. **FCCHEN perspectives -** FCC providers were concerned that it would take significant time to fulfill FCCHEN requirements, and their income would also decrease. Before deciding whether to join a FCCHEN, many providers wanted more information about specific impacts on their time, income, and program operations. Despite concerns, some providers saw potential value in being part of a FCC network.

4. **Barriers to accepting vouchers -** Many FCC providers did not understand what a voucher or subsidy meant, and could benefit from more information in order to better support families needing financial help. Center-based providers shared specific suggestions related to the voucher system.
5. **Provider engagement -** Many providers have felt left out of conversations regarding TK and UPK and would like to be involved and informed going forward. Providers are eager to have a say in the county's decisions that affect early childhood education and care, highlighting the importance of their involvement in ongoing planning and policy-making.

Introduction

Background

San Mateo County aims to reach all four-year-olds and high-need three-year-olds with full-day, high quality early learning programs. To meet families' diverse needs, the county would like to develop a mixed delivery early learning system, including Head Start, public and private center-based child care and preschool, public schools (TK), and family child care home (FCC) providers. To advance this vision, the Child Care Partnership Council (CCPC) established an ad hoc committee called the UPK Mixed Delivery Planning Committee. The Committee began meeting in 2023 and now includes 46 diverse members, including school districts, teacher associations, referral agencies, providers from different settings, and families in San Mateo County. By June 2024, the Committee aims to develop a comprehensive plan[1] that includes the following components:

- Needs assessment
- Vision and coherence
- Community engagement and partnerships
- Workforce recruitment and professional learning
- Curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Facilities, services, and operations

Goal of the UPK Mixed Delivery Planning Committee

Plan for how all 4-year-olds and an increased number of at-promise 3-year-olds in San Mateo County will be able to access full-day learning programs before kindergarten that meet parents' needs in a high-quality, mixed-delivery system of school districts, preschool programs, and expanded learning offerings.

To inform this plan's development, the Child Care Coordinating Council (4Cs) of San Mateo County is leading efforts to understand the perspectives of families and providers. In early 2024, 4Cs contracted with VIVA Social Impact Partners, a private consulting firm based in San Mateo County, to facilitate five focus groups with FCC and center-based providers. Through focus groups, 4Cs and the Planning Committee aimed to understand:

1. The experiences, challenges, and recommendations that childcare providers have for UPK implementation in the current mixed-delivery system in San Mateo County.
2. The pros and cons of establishing a Family Child Care Home Education Network (FCCHEN) in San Mateo County and gauging interest in participating in a FCCHEN.

[1] After June 2024, the work group will continue refining the plan based on ongoing community input.

Part 4: Wrap Up

A. We are nearing the end of our time together. Thank you for participating! All of these great insights will be shared with San Mateo's UPK Planning Committee to make sure Universal Pre-Kindergarten is inclusive of FCC providers.
B. To thank you for your time and contributions, 4Cs will send each of you a $100 stipend. You should receive the check in the mail within two weeks. Please contact Gladys with any questions about your stipend payment.
C. Do you have any final questions to ask or thoughts you would like to share?

Notes: (1) The modality used to capture responses varied between focus groups. Some sessions utilized the Zoom poll function, while other sessions utilized Powerpoint slides to relay questions to attendees. (2) Asterisks indicate priority questions.

one. For context, Transitional Kindergarten for four-year olds began in 2022-23 and will be fully implemented by 2025-26.

1. Poll Question 2: Have you been serving more infants and toddlers?
2. Poll Question 3: * Have you offered before or after-school care for TK students?
3. Poll Question 4: * Have you tried offering care before 7 am, after 6 pm, or on weekends?

F. Now we have a question about what could help your program adapt to TK.
   1. Poll Question 5:* We have some ideas for how to help providers adapt to Transitional Kindergarten (TK). To what extent do you think each of these would be helpful to you?
      - Support for building partnerships with school districts to provide before/after school wrap-around care.
      - Grants to buy age-appropriate materials and to reconfigure facilities for either younger or older children
      - Professional development to support working with new age groups
      - Higher reimbursement rates for serving younger children
      - Marketing strategies to help providers promote their programs given the shift in the market/competition with TK
   2. *Follow-up questions for a few providers to answer:*
      i. *Why do you view ___ as a more helpful option?*
      ii. *Why do you view ___ as a less helpful option?*
      iii. *Do you have other ideas for how to help your program adapt to TK?*

Part 2: Subsidized Capacity

A. As part of Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK), increasing the number of subsidized (or reduced cost) spaces in San Mateo County is a priority for the Planning Committee. This is one way to make care more affordable for families.
B. * Are there challenges you face to accept kids who have vouchers (examples of subsidies are CalWORKS, AP, and Migrant AP)?
   1. Ask for initial reactions
   2. Challenge to vet: Families have trouble finding providers to accept their vouchers based on their rates. But at the same time, providers are under enrolled and want to serve more children from 4Cs. This may be because:
      i. Based on the reimbursement rates, it can be more cost-effective to take private pay families who can afford to pay more for care.
      ii. May not be able to waive the family co-pay for those who use subsidy vouchers (i.e, CalWORKs S1, CalWORKs S2, CalWORKs S3, Alternative Payment, Migrant AP).
B. What could help you serve more kids who have subsidies?

Part 3: Other Ideas

A. * The UPK Planning Committee will hear your feedback and use it to create a plan. Are there ways that you want to continue to be involved and make your voice heard?

Appendix IV – Protocol for Center-based Providers

Private Centers Focus Group Protocol

Part 1: TK Considerations

Context

D. A group of local organizations, county government agencies, and community members in San Mateo County are trying to figure out how to make sure that 3 and 4 year olds have access to learning programs that are high quality and meet their families' needs. This group is called the UPK Mixed Delivery Planning Committee. By June this group will develop some initial recommendations for San Mateo County that will be refined and tested in future school years.
E. First I have some questions for you about how you have been impacted by Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and what supports you and your program need to survive and thrive. TK is one way that the county (and the state) are trying to make sure that 3 and 4 year olds have access to learning programs. It is one of many early learning options. State preschool, Headstart, center-based care, and family child care homes are other examples. TK is part of the K-12 public school system and is the first year of a two-year kindergarten program that uses a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate. It is free and by SY 2025-2026 it will be universally available to all 4 year olds in California. Again, TK is one of many programs. So families can choose to place their child in TK, or another option like California State Preschool (CSPP), Head Start or private care, or no program at all.
F. Before we move to a discussion, are there any clarification questions about what TK is or how it relates to Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK)?

Discussion

D. * Here are a few things we've heard from providers like yourself about the challenges and impact of TK implementation. [*Show a slide with the following list. Read through it and ask the participants if anything else should be captured. If there are other challenges/impacts they share, type them on the slide.]*
    1. Program enrollment could decrease.
    2. Ages served in early learning programs have changed.
    3. Desire to inform families of their right to choose and the options available outside of Transitional Kindergarten.
    4. Local Education Agencies, such as school districts, are not communicating nor collaborating with early learning and care programs.
    5. Concern for young children's development. Will they receive developmentally appropriate care and education in Transitional Kindergarten?
    6. Other?

E. Now we have some questions for you about how your program has changed since TK began. We will now launch three Mentimeter polls and have a quick discussion after each

iii. [only mention if providers seem uninterested in a FCCHEN] Advocate to the state that a FCCHEN is not the right solution for San Mateo

B. *The UPK Planning Committee will hear your feedback and use it to create a plan. Are there ways that you want to continue to be involved and make your voice heard?

Part 4: Wrap Up

C. We are nearing the end of our time together. Thank you for participating! All of these great insights will be shared with San Mateo's UPK Planning Committee to make sure Universal Pre-Kindergarten is inclusive of FCC providers.
D. To thank you for your time and contributions, 4Cs will send each of you a $100 stipend. You should receive the check in the mail within two weeks. Please contact Gladys with any questions about your stipend payment.
E. Do you have any final questions to ask or thoughts you would like to share?

Notes: (1) The modality used to capture responses varied between focus groups. Some sessions utilized the Zoom poll function, while other sessions utilized Powerpoint slides to relay questions to attendees. (2) Asterisks indicate priority questions.

- Offer parenting education to families
- Connect children and families to social and health services that they need
- Food that is nutritious (meets Child and Adult Care Food Program or National School Lunch Program Requirements)
- Providers participate in training and support
- Complete Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) assessments for each child
- Periodic assessments to make sure services are high-quality
- Providers meet educational requirements (Program Director Level Permit for director, Associate Teacher Permit for someone supervising an assistant)

Follow-up questions for providers to answer:

- *Why do you view __ as especially important for a quality program?*
- *Why do you view __ as not describing a quality program?*
- *When you think about how you and your families think about quality care, is there anything missing from this list?*

B. Subsidized Capacity

1. As part of Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK), increasing the number of subsidized (or reduced cost) spaces in San Mateo County is a priority for the Planning Committee. This is one way to make care more affordable for families.
2. * Are there challenges you face to accept kids who have vouchers (examples of subsidies are CalWORKS, AP, and Migrant AP)?
    i. Ask for initial reactions
    ii. Challenge to vet: Families have trouble finding providers to accept their vouchers based on their rates. But at the same time, providers are under enrolled and want to serve more children from 4Cs. This may be because:
        1. Based on the reimbursement rates, it can be more cost-effective to take private pay families who can afford to pay more for care.
        2. May not be able to waive the family co-pay for those who use subsidy vouchers (i.e, CalWORKs S1, CalWORKs S2, CalWORKs S3, Alternative Payment, Migrant AP).
3. What could help you serve more kids who have subsidies?

Part 3: Other Ideas

A. Creating a FCCHEN and having more subsidized spaces are both ideas about how providers in San Mateo County can serve all 3 and 4 year olds who need care. As family child care providers, what else do you think would help you serve families and adapt to the implementation of UPK during this time?
    1. Ask for initial reactions about ideas for support.
    2. * Ask to what extent they see each of the following as helpful, if not already discussed.
        i. Communications Campaign for families - to tell families about their child care options and right to choose what works best for them
        ii. Information/Trainings for providers - to help providers educate families about their child care options and right to choose what works best for them

- Help managing subsidy payments, so payments are received regularly and on time.
- Learn business skills (e.g., record keeping, budget development, taxes, and liability insurance)
- Receive lists of substitute teachers and assistants (note that the network will not screen them)
- Participation in UPK as a Title 5 provider, with quality standards that exceed licensing requirements.
- Help with buying or loaning equipment (e.g., chairs, tables, toys, bikes, books, washing stations outside homes)
- Help applying for grants to improve facilities

2. * **What are your <u>concerns</u> about participating in a family child care home network (FCCHEN)?**
    i. Ask for initial reactions about concerns.

    Poll Question 7: We want to know what would **concern you about being part of a family child care home network (FCCHEN).** Please rate each of the following on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being "not a concern" and 5 being "would keep me from participating"
    - Education requirements for Title 5 providers could keep me from participating. (Program Director Level Permit for director, Associate Teacher Permit for someone supervising an assistant)
    - Not high enough compensation compared to Alternative Payment (AP) vouchers, and the AP program also has fewer requirements.
    - Must follow quality standards for Title 5 funded programs.
    - Would need to complete Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) child assessments, which takes time and sometimes more training.
    - Less independence, because my program would be monitored by FCCHEN staff.

    Follow-up questions for providers to answer:
    - *Why do you view __ as especially concerning?*
    - *Why do you view ___ as not much of a concern?*
    - *Do you have other concerns not shown in the poll that you want to raise?*
    - Follow-up question: What ideas do you have to make ___ less of a concern?
    - What support would you need from agencies like 4Cs to help you become a Title 5 provider?

3. **To participate in a family child care home network (FCCHEN), you need to meet certain quality requirements. We want to know what you think about these requirements.**

    Poll Question 8: The options below are **how** family child care home networks (FCCHENs) **define** quality care. Please select all the options that you and/or the families you serve think are important for a quality program.
    - Activities that are age and developmentally appropriate
    - Care for and supervise children
    - Care that meets each child's language and culture needs

iv. Purchase or loan equipment (e.g., chairs, tables, toys, bikes, books, washing stations outside homes)
v. Lists of substitutes and assistants
vi. Help applying for grants to improve facilities
vii. Help completing Desired Results Developmental Profiles (DRDP) and preparing for licensing inspections

c. What is required to participate?
   i. Must be a Title 5 provider. This most importantly includes:
      1. Meet certain education requirements (Program Director Level Permit for director, Associate Teacher Permit for someone supervising an assistant)
      2. Receive a background check, CPR, First Aid, and Preventative Health Practices certification
      3. Planned and unplanned site inspections from Community Care Licensing.
      4. Use the following ratios:
         a. Infants 0-18 months
            i. 1:3 adult-child ratio
            ii. 1:18 teacher-child ratio
         b. Toddlers 18-36 months
            i. 1:4 adult-child ratio
            ii. 1:16 teacher-child ratio
         c. Preschool 36 - Kinder
            i. 1:8 adult-child ratio
            ii. 1:24 teacher-child ratio
   ii. Must complete Desired Results Developmental Profiles (DRDP) for each child within 60 calendar days of enrollment and at least once every 6 months thereafter
   iii. Each year receive an assessment using the Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale

C. Any clarification questions about FCCHENs before we discuss your thoughts on the pros and cons of having a network like this in San Mateo County?

Discussion

A. **FCCHEN Benefits & Concerns:** First, we'll discuss what you see as the benefits or positive aspects of having and participating in a family child care home network (FCCHEN). After a discussion about its benefits, we will move on to discuss any concerns or challenges you foresee.
   1. * **How do you think you would <u>benefit</u> from having a FCCHEN in San Mateo County?**
      1. Ask for initial reactions about benefits.

      Poll Question 6: We want to know how you think a family child care home network (FCCHEN) would be **helpful** to you. Please rate each of the following on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not helpful at all and 5 being very helpful.
      - Help with quality improvement, including professional development.
      - Help with enrolling children in my program.

---

2. Poll Question 3: * Have you offered before or after-school care for TK students?
3. Poll Question 4: * Have you tried offering care before 7 am, after 6 pm, or on weekends?

C. Now we have a question about what could help your program adapt to TK.
   1. Poll Question 5:* We have some ideas for how to help providers adapt to Transitional Kindergarten (TK). To what extent do you think each of these would be helpful to you?
      - Support for building partnerships with school districts to provide before/after school wrap-around care.
      - Grants to buy age-appropriate materials and to reconfigure facilities for either younger or older children
      - Professional development to support working with new age groups
      - Higher reimbursement rates for serving younger children
      - Marketing strategies to help providers promote their programs given the shift in the market/competition with TK
   2. *Follow-up questions for a few providers to answer:*
      i. *Why do you view __ as a more helpful option?*
      ii. *Why do you view ___ as a less helpful option?*
      iii. *Do you have other ideas for how to help your program adapt to TK?*

Part 2: FCCHEN Context

Context

A. Now I want to share with you a specific idea that the UPK Planning Committee has been thinking about to help family child care homes like yourselves who are impacted by TK and doing your best to serve families. The idea is a family child care home education network, or FCCHEN. It is when family child care homes like yourselves come together in a network to offer subsidized (or reduced cost) care for young children. The state funds FCCHENs in different counties, and currently, San Mateo does not have one. Creating a FCCHEN is one idea to help San Mateo family child care homes adapt to TK and help all families have access to pre-kindergarten.

B. Context on family child care home education networks (FCCHENs):
   a. What is it?
      i. Network of individual family child care homes that offer reduced cost child care
      ii. Help family child care homes recruit and enroll kids who are eligible for subsidies. Other benefits for providers include mentoring on professional development and business skills
      iii. To participate, providers must meet certain requirements, including Title 5 licensing
      iv. San Mateo County is thinking about starting one of these networks, which almost all counties in California already have
   b. What services would I get as a provider?
      i. Help recruiting and enrolling subsidy-eligible families
      ii. Coaching and materials on educational activities to improve quality
      iii. Learn business skills (e.g., record keeping, budget development, taxes, and liability insurance)

Appendix III – Protocol for FCC Providers

Family Child Care Provider Focus Group Protocol

Part 1: TK Considerations

Context

A. A group of local organizations, county government agencies, and community members in San Mateo County are trying to figure out how to make sure that 3 and 4 year olds have access to learning programs that are high quality and meet their families' needs. This group is called the UPK Mixed Delivery Planning Committee. By June this group will develop some initial recommendations for San Mateo County that will be refined and tested in future school years.
B. First I have some questions for you about how you have been impacted by Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and what supports you and your program need to survive and thrive. TK is one way that the county (and the state) are trying to make sure that 3 and 4 year olds have access to learning programs. It is one of many early learning options. State preschool, Headstart, center-based care, and family child care homes are other examples. TK is part of the K-12 public school system and is the first year of a two-year kindergarten program that uses a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate. It is free and by SY 2025-2026 it will be universally available to all 4 year olds in California. Again, TK is one of many programs. So families can choose to place their child in TK, or another option like California State Preschool (CSPP), Head Start or private care, or no program at all.
C. Before we move to a discussion, are there any clarification questions about what TK is or how it relates to Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK)?

Discussion

A. * Here are a few things we've heard from providers like yourself about the challenges and impact of TK implementation. [*Show a slide with the following list. Read through it and ask the participants if anything else should be captured. If there are other challenges/impacts they share, type them on the slide.]*
    1. Program enrollment could decrease.
    2. Ages served in early learning programs have changed.
    3. Desire to inform families of their right to choose and the options available outside of Transitional Kindergarten.
    4. Local Education Agencies, such as school districts, are not communicating nor collaborating with early learning and care programs.
    5. Concern for young children's development. Will they receive developmentally appropriate care and education in Transitional Kindergarten?
    6. Other?

B. Now we have some questions for you about how your program has changed since TK began. We will now launch three Mentimeter polls and have a quick discussion after each one. For context, Transitional Kindergarten for four-year olds began in 2022-23 and will be fully implemented by 2025-26.
    1. Poll Question 2: Have you been serving more infants and toddlers?

TOPIC: Understanding of pros and cons to establishing a Family Child Care Home Education Network (FCCHEN) and gauge provider level of interest in becoming a Title 5 provider.

LEARNING QUESTIONS:

1. What do FCC providers view as the benefits of a Family Child Care Home Education Network (FCCHEN)?
    - Potential benefits to vet with providers include:
        - Assistance with quality improvement, including professional development
        - Support full enrolment in participating FCCs
        - Manage subsidy payments allowing for consistency and timeliness of payments.
        - Support business acumen, which includes workshops on budget development, liability insurance record keeping ect.
        - Support hiring and retaining assistants/staff
        - Participation in UPK as a Title 5 provider

2. What do FCC providers view as the downsides of establishing a Family Child Care Home Education Network (FCCHEN)? What support can be offered to mitigate some of the potential challenges?
    - Potential cons to vet with providers include:
        - Difficulty recruiting qualified providers due to education requirements
            - Providers may be reluctant to meet requirements because they can receive the same or, in some cases, a higher rate of compensation if they serve children whose families have AP program vouchers. The AP program also has fewer requirements.
        - Must follow quality standards of Title 5 financed programs.
            - Must complete DRDP for children under their care for at least 10 hours a week.
            - Observations of their childcare site, some providers may not want oversight.

3. To what extent are Family Child Care Home providers and private center-based providers in San Mateo County interested in becoming Title 5 providers? How can we make it work for you?

4. What other supports are necessary? Communications Campaign? Marketing Strategies given the shift in the market/competition?

5. What does quality look like for you? For parents? Does that align with the FCCHEN requirements?

Appendix II – Learning Questions

TOPIC: Experiences, challenges, and recommendations for UPK implementation considering the current mixed-delivery system.

LEARNING QUESTIONS:

1. What capacity do providers have to pivot to serving more infants and toddlers and/or before/after school for children in TK and above? What supports do they need to make these pivots?
    - Potential solutions to vet with providers include:
        i. Support for building partnerships with school districts to provide before/after school wrap around care.
        ii. Grants to buy age-appropriate materials and to reconfigure facilities for either younger or older children
        iii. Professional development to support working with new age groups
        iv. Higher reimbursement rates for serving younger children
2. What support do FCC providers and private center-based providers need to increase their subsidized capacity?
3. What type of investments or supports are needed to provide and maintain a high-quality curriculum? (Maybe group this with Q2)
4. What information, training or support do FCC providers and private center-based providers need to be able to communicate one integrated system to families and help promote family choice?
5. To what extent are FCC providers and private center-based providers interested in becoming TK teachers? If interested, what barriers do they face to becoming TK teachers? What type of support do providers need in their current roles (e.g., compensation and benefits)?
6. How would FCC providers and private center-based providers like to continue to be involved as the UPK mixed delivery plan continues to be refined?
7. What additional recommendations do FCC providers and private center-based providers have for the UPK Planning Committee?
8. What capacity do providers have to increase non-traditional hours of care?

Hours	• Traditional, 7am-6pm (80%) • Before school (20%) • After school (20%) • Drop-in (10%) • Non-traditional (10%) • Overnight (0%) • Rotating Schedule (0%) * Note that providers could select all options that apply.
Serve Children through Subsidy Program?	• Yes (80%) • No (20%)

	* Note that city data was not collected for one FCC provider, so percentages do not sum to 100%.
Hours	• Traditional, 7am-6pm (82%) • Drop-in (26%) • After school (24%) • Non-traditional (18%) • Before school (13%) • Rotating Schedule (11%) • Overnight (8%) * Note that providers could select all options that apply.
Serve Children through Subsidy Program?	• Yes (39%) • No (53%) * Note that subsidy data was not collected for three FCC providers, so percentages do not sum to 100%.

Private Centers

In total, 20 private center-based providers participated in focus groups. Their demographic characteristics are reported below.

Characteristic	Percent
Primary Language	• English (80%) • Spanish (10%) • Mandarin (10%)
Region	• North (50%) • South (30%) • Central (15%) • Coast (5%)
City	• Daly City (20%) • Redwood City (15%) • San Mateo (15%) • Pacifica (10%) • East Palo Alto (5%) • Belmont (5%) • Brisbane (5%) • Menlo Park (5%) • Multiple (5%) • Portola Valley (5%) • San Carlos (5%) • South San Francisco (5%)

Appendices

Appendix I – Provider Demographics

Family Child Care Homes

In total, 38 Family Child Care Home providers participated in focus groups. Their demographic characteristics are reported below.

Characteristic	Percent
License Size	• Large License, up to 14 children (61%) • Small License, up to 8 children (32%) * Note that licensing data was not collected for three FCC providers, so percentages do not sum to 100%.
Primary Language	• Spanish (42%) • English (39%) • Mandarin (18%) • Cantonese (3%) * Note that three providers indicated more than one primary language.
Region	• Central (39%) • South (26%) • North (18%) • Coast (8%) * Note that region data was not collected for three FCC providers, so percentages do not sum to 100%.
City	• San Mateo (26%) • Redwood City (16%) • South San Francisco (13%) • East Palo Alto (8%) • Burlingame (5%) • Daly City (5%) • Foster City (5%) • Millbrae (5%) • San Bruno (5%) • San Carlos (5%) • Belmont (3%)

Many FCC providers did not understand the Alternative Payment Program voucher process, what the vouchers were, and how they are used. Providers could benefit from more information. Given the complexity of subsidy options, it would also be helpful for providers to learn how to redirect subsidy-related inquiries from families to 4Cs.

11. **Connect with school districts to understand whether they are prioritizing kindergarten spaces at home schools for current TK students.**

    Two providers mentioned how schools are telling families that they must enroll in TK at their home school in order to save a spot for kindergarten. Providers suggested that this disincentivizes families from choosing other options. It would be worth corroborating with schools and TK teachers whether this is occurring, and if so, find a path forward that promotes family choice.

12. **Connect with school districts to understand their safety policies and practices for TK students.**

    Several center-based providers mentioned hearing stories regarding safety issues at TK programs. For example, they mentioned schools not checking whether authorized adults are picking up children after school and children walking to the bathroom unattended. It would be worth corroborating with school districts whether this is occurring, and if so, develop solutions to promote safety, along with clear communications about TK policies and standards to families and providers.

13. **Subsidize FCC and center-based care for middle-income families.**

    Consider creating a sliding-scale scholarship program to make other early care and education options financially viable for middle-income families in San Mateo County. Note that creating a sliding-scale scholarship program would be a multi-year effort involving creating a child care burden index and securing a funding source. Another possible strategy would be to advocate for publicly subsidized family eligibility requirements to be reflective of the regional cost of living rather than state median income.

5. **Advocate for higher reimbursement rates for serving young children.**

   Higher reimbursement rates would help make serving infants and toddlers financially viable for providers. Include providers in leading and advancing advocacy efforts, with options to participate in English, Spanish or Mandarin.

6. **Offer professional development to support providers who want to work with infants and toddlers.**

   Some center-based providers would appreciate training on how best to care for infants and toddlers. One option is the Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) offered by WestEd. When communicating about professional development offerings, keep in mind that some providers will not be interested in training to work with infants and toddlers.

7. **Make grants available to providers needing to buy age-appropriate materials or reconfigure facilities for younger or older children.**

   Develop straightforward, time-efficient application processes to make it easy for providers to apply to grants. VIVA recommends coupling a streamlined application process with individual or group technical assistance sessions.

8. **Model how implementing a FCCHEN would impact family child care providers' time and income.**

   FCC providers were concerned that it would take significant time to fulfill FCCHEN requirements, and their income would also decrease. Before deciding whether to implement a FCCHEN, it would help to model predicted impacts on different types of FCC providers. If the Committee does decide to create a FCCHEN, it would be important to communicate how joining would impact providers' time, income, and program operations, and how a FCCHEN differs from their involvement with 4Cs.

9. **Consider other options for family child care networks without FCCHEN requirements.**

   Some FCC providers liked the idea of organizing together with other FCC programs and having available supports. It could be worth investigating network options that do not entail fulfilling as many additional requirements. FCC providers could be encouraged to become involved in an association that provides peer support, learning, and advocacy, which was of interest to focus group participants. Examples of this type of group include the San Mateo County Family Childcare Organization (for FCCs only) and the Directors' Support Network (includes all provider types).

10. **Educate FCC providers about child care vouchers and other subsidized care options so they are informed and know how to direct lower-income families to 4Cs.**

Many providers wished to better understand how their input is shaping countywide plans. VIVA suggests following up with all focus group participants to share this report and the ideas that the UPK Mixed Delivery Planning Committee is considering. Consider also reaching out to all FCC and center-based providers in San Mateo County to share the context of the UPK planning goal and process and how they can get involved. Additionally, to support providers' desire to advocate for their needs, share information about existing channels, such as the Child Care Providers' Union and CCPC general meetings. It may also help to understand whether there are barriers to participation in these groups for FCC providers, who are more likely to work nontraditional hours and have primary languages other than English.

3. **Develop partnerships between school districts and other early learning programs.**

   Support FCC and center-based providers in building partnerships with local school districts to provide care at times when TK is unavailable, such as before/after school, holidays, and seasonal breaks. Partnerships should include determining how school districts can support and/or lead the transportation of children to FCC and center-based provider sites. 4Cs and their partners can consider encouraging school districts and other Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) serving TK and Kindergarten students to utilize the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P) as the funding mechanism to support partnerships with early care and education programs. ELO-P funds are highly flexible and could be used to pay for transportation to community care programs, among other initiatives. Since LEAs that receive funds for classroom-based instructional programs serving TK through 6th grade cannot opt out of ELO-P funding, it is advantageous to use the available funding. Per the *February 2024 ELO-P TK and K Legislative Report* provided by CDE, Redwood City Elementary and San Bruno Park Elementary school districts are already utilizing ELO-P dollars for TK and K students in the 2023-24 school year. Capturing approaches and lessons learned from these LEAs can support the exploration of structured partnership agreements between districts, early learning agencies, and providers.

4. **Launch a communications campaign on family choice that includes educating providers as trusted messengers.**

   Launch a countywide communications campaign to inform families about their child care options and right to choose what works best for them. As part of the campaign, educate providers on available options and share guidance on how providers can support families in making the best decision for their children. Include multiple forms of outreach, including Zoom Q&A sessions and written communications. Include outreach to Mandarin-speaking providers, who seemed least knowledgeable about TK. In communications to FCC and center-based providers, share how the county is working to support their programs and empathize with the challenges they have been facing.

desire to continue making their voices heard and engage with elected officials tasked with strengthening the mixed delivery system. Several providers expressed interest in not only sharing input, but also becoming involved in decision-making conversations. For example, one provider shared how they would like to attend Committee meetings, and others mentioned wanting to be involved in shaping communications campaigns targeted at families. Several Mandarin-speaking FCC providers mentioned how video calls were a helpful format for their participation. Others described wanting to stay in the loop regarding how their input shapes the Committee's decisions.

Across many focus groups, providers desired more detailed information about potential changes that the UPK Mixed Delivery Planning Committee is considering rolling out. The information would help providers know how to best advocate for themselves and the families whom they serve.

A number of providers wanted to be involved in advocacy efforts to encourage elected officials to listen to their perspectives. These providers felt left out from prior conversations surrounding the TK rollout, or exhausted from advocating for their needs without experiencing any changes in return. There was a particularly strong sense of urgency among several providers in the Spanish language FCC focus group, who shared cell phone numbers with each other in the Zoom chat and mentioned wanting to protest their exclusion from TK at city hall or the state capital. One of these providers mentioned the importance of organizing across language barriers, alongside fellow Mandarin and English-speaking providers. Note that when sharing their desire to participate in advocacy work, providers did not mention any existing groups, such as the Child Care Providers' Union or CCPC general meetings.

Recommendations

Based on insights from 38 FCC and 20 center-based providers, VIVA developed the following list of recommendations for the UPK Mixed Delivery Planning Committee. Recommendations include direct suggestions from providers, as well as suggestions that VIVA developed by considering focus group learnings in the context of the Committee's work. Note that recommendations are not listed in any particular order.

1. **Create clear pathways for provider engagement in the UPK planning process.**

   Determine components of the UPK planning process that would especially benefit from providers' input and decision-making. To best leverage providers' perspectives, VIVA recommends that the Committee identify specific, actionable areas for provider engagement, such as planning an approach for partnering with school districts.

2. **Regularly communicate with FCC and center-based providers regarding the evolution of UPK in San Mateo County and how they can participate.**

Barriers to Accepting Vouchers

Many FCC providers said that they had not cared for children who have vouchers.[7] Others shared that they did not understand the process for accepting a child with vouchers, or asked clarification questions to understand what was meant by a voucher or subsidy. Several FCC providers suggested that it would be helpful for them to know how to support families with obtaining vouchers. In the Mandarin-speaking focus group, a provider mentioned that not many Chinese-identifying families have subsidies, and expressed that this would be a barrier to Mandarin-speaking providers accepting children with vouchers.

Center-based providers[8] were generally more informed about vouchers and had specific suggestions for streamlining the process:

- A few providers mentioned a publicly available list of eligible programs and explained that they did not see their programs included on the list; however, the list that was referenced was not clearly named during the session. Thus, it is unclear if providers are referring to the 4Cs list for program vacancies in the County or the 4Cs list of subsidized programs offered to families who may not qualify for the California Alternative Payment Program.
- In one focus group, a provider suggested shifting the voucher application process to be provider-led, so that programs can plan based on the anticipated number of children they will serve and their reimbursement rates. It is important to note that while such a shift may address the provider's concerns, state mandates would not allow for such a change.
- Several providers shared that they wanted 4Cs to help set families' expectations by letting them know that there is a waitlist with a limited number of spots that become available periodically. It is important to note that as the Alternative Payment Program administrator, 4Cs maintains an eligibility list that is not first-come, first-serve. Families are admitted to the Alternative Payment Program based on the program's requirements mandated by the state related to income, family size, and other circumstances (i.e, children at risk for neglect or abuse and children who are recipients of child protective services).
- A provider noted that they would still like to receive compensation even if a child does not show up.

Provider Engagement

Overall, providers expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share their perspectives through the focus groups. As one Mandarin-speaking FCC provider remarked, "It feels like you are the bridge between us and the government." Yet across all five focus groups, providers expressed a strong

[7] Overall, 39% of the FCC providers who participated said that they serve children through a subsidy program, compared to 80% of center-based providers (see *Appendix I - Provider Demographics*).
[8] Note that not all center-based providers consistently cared for children with vouchers. For example, one provider mentioned that it has been several years since they last had a child with vouchers, and at least two center-based providers were not familiar with vouchers .

- Exactly how would being part of a FCCHEN impact my wages and what I am able to pay my staff?

In the English-speaking FCC focus groups, providers were strongly opposed to a FCCHEN, since it could lead to reduced pay. As one provider stated: "If it means taking a cut in pay, it would not be a program for me." In the Mandarin and English-speaking FCC focus groups, providers highlighted how the increased requirements are not worth the lower pay. In one provider's words: "They are asking for too much but giving too little." For example, completing DRDP assessments for every child seemed especially unrealistic for small FCCs, and obtaining required permits did not feel feasible. While these providers did not fundamentally disagree with FCCHEN standards as measures of quality (see box below), the requirements to fulfill them seemed unrealistically high. To illustrate, one provider mentioned using DRDP as a tool for thinking about the quality of her program, but felt she did not have the capacity to regularly complete it for every child.

QUALITY REQUIREMENTS OF FCCHENs

a. Activities that are age and developmentally appropriate
b. Care for and supervise children
c. Care that meets each child's language and culture needs
d. Connect children and families to social and health services that they need
e. Food that is nutritious (meets Child and Adult Care Food Program or National School Lunch Program Requirements)
f. Providers participate in training and support
g. Complete Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) assessments for each child
h. Periodic assessments to make sure services are high-quality
i. Providers meet educational requirements (Program Director Level Permit for director, Associate Teacher Permit for someone supervising an assistant)

Benefits

In the Spanish language FCC focus group, VIVA facilitators shared general information and services offered by FCCHENs, before outlining all the requirements. Before hearing all the requirements, many of the Spanish-speaking providers viewed FCCHENs as potentially beneficial, although they still desired more detailed information before making a decision. They liked the idea of organizing together as a network. One provider mentioned how in the past she participated in a FCC network in San Mateo County, and appreciated how it offered health insurance and other benefits. If a FCCHEN were implemented, a provider noted that more education opportunities would need to be offered in Spanish.

the Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC)[5] offered by WestEd. However, several other center-based providers said that they would not be interested in working with infants.

→ ***Help programs pay their staff a living wage.***
Several providers highlighted how their staff is underpaid, and they would like support increasing their wages.

It is important to note that there were providers in almost every focus group who did not support any of the strategies proposed by the UPK Mixed Delivery Planning Committee.[6] These FCC and center-based providers expressed frustration at feeling left out of the TK rollout, and then being presented with strategies that would require them to adapt their programs in response. As an English-speaking FCC provider stated: "We should be included [in discussions] without changing our program model." These providers viewed nearly all of the proposed strategies as essentially placing the burden of adapting to TK on providers. They would prefer that San Mateo County focus on making changes at the systems level rather than asking FCC and center-based providers to spend extra time on activities that are primarily meant to support their adaptation to TK (e.g., professional development courses and applying for grants).

Perspectives on Family Child Care Home Education Networks (FCCHENs)

FCC providers were asked to share their perspectives on implementing a Family Child Care Home Education Network (FCCHEN) in San Mateo County. The UPK Mixed Delivery Planning Committee is considering implementing a FCCHEN, which would offer subsidized care for families and support for FCC providers. After learning about FCCHEN services and requirements (see *Appendix III - Protocol for FCCs*), providers shared their concerns and reflected on potential benefits.

Concerns

Across all three FCC focus groups, providers expressed a desire for more specific information about how FCCHEN requirements would impact their program operations. Many felt that they needed more detailed information in order to decide whether they would want to participate in a FCCHEN in San Mateo County. Questions raised by providers included:

- I currently fulfill QRIS and/or Title 22 requirements. How much additional time and effort would I need to spend fulfilling FCCHEN requirements, including Title 5?
- How would the way in which I engage with 4Cs compare to how I would engage with a FCCHEN?

[5] Note that PITC training is not offered free of charge to all participants. Scholarships are available for some offerings.
[6] Some of these providers supported the idea of a communications campaign.

The list below includes strategies that providers found most promising. It includes strategies from the Committee, along with additional ideas brainstormed during discussions. Strategies are listed roughly in order of popularity.

- → ***Support for building partnerships with school districts to provide wrap-around care.***
  Some FCC and center-based providers were interested in working with schools to offer care at times when TK is unavailable, such as before/after school, holidays, and seasonal breaks. A few noted that transporting young children to/from TK and their program sites would pose a challenge and potential liability, and they could use support with transportation.
- → ***Facilitate a communications campaign to inform families about their child care options and right to choose what works best for them. In addition, develop and execute an approach to educate providers on how to help inform families of their options.***
  Many FCC and center-based providers highlighted how families need to better understand the early learning options available to them, including how options differ from one another. Some providers also noted that it would be helpful to receive more information about TK and other early care and education settings, so they can help families understand their options and make the best choices for their children.
- → ***Subsidize the cost of other early learning options for low and middle-income families.***
  Many providers noted that the significant cost difference between TK and other programs does not present families with a fair choice. They wished that lower and middle-income families could receive vouchers to attend other program options. As a Mandarin-speaking FCC provider said: "We cannot care for children for free, so how can we compete?"
- → ***Grants to buy age-appropriate materials and to reconfigure facilities for either younger or older children.***
  Several center-based providers said that receiving grants for materials and facilities would be helpful. However, a center-based provider noted that state grant application processes currently take a long time and can deter providers from applying. As she elaborated: "all the state grants that we've applied for…are so onerous that we question sometimes whether they're worthwhile."
- → ***Advocate for higher reimbursement rates for serving young children.***
  Several providers noted that serving more infants and toddlers is challenging, given the low teacher-child ratios and current reimbursement rates. To sustainably serve younger children, they need financial support.
- → ***Professional development to support providers who want to work with infants and toddlers.***
  Several center-based providers noted that learning how to best care for infants and toddlers would be helpful. One provider noted that free training is available online, such as

Adapting to TK

In addition to sharing concerns, providers described how they are already adapting and responding to the introduction of TK.

Some English-speaking FCC providers and many center-based providers have tried modifying their programs to attract preschool families in a more competitive market. For example, several English-speaking FCC providers added extracurricular activities, such as yoga and cooking, and center-based providers in both focus groups made changes like adding a language immersion program or highlighting their play-based approach. Mandarin-speaking FCC providers did not describe making any changes to adapt to TK.[4]

Four center-based providers also described extending their program hours or offering after-school programs. A few providers also mentioned other strategies, such as offering discounts to families who keep their four-year-olds enrolled in their programs or fostering relationships with representatives from local public schools with the goal of coordinating before/after school care. Additionally, many center-based providers noted that they communicate with families to help them understand their four-year-old's early care and education options.

Desired Supports

After sharing how their programs are responding to TK, focus group participants considered how the county could best support FCC and center-based providers and the families they serve. VIVA presented a list of proposed strategies from the UPK Mixed Delivery Planning Committee (see table below) and asked providers to brainstorm other ideas.

PROPOSED STRATEGIES FROM THE UPK MIXED DELIVERY PLANNING COMMITTEE

a. Support for building partnerships with school districts to provide before/after school wrap-around care.
b. Grants to buy age-appropriate materials and to reconfigure facilities for either younger or older children.
c. Professional development to support working with new age groups.
d. Higher reimbursement rates for serving younger children.
e. Marketing strategies to help providers promote their programs given the shift in the market/competition with TK.
f. Communications campaign for families - to tell families about their child care options and right to choose what works best for them.
g. Information/training for providers - to help providers educate families about their child care options and right to choose what works best for them.

[4] Note that Spanish-speaking FCC providers did not share how they have adapted to TK. When asked, these providers focused on sharing additional challenges they have faced during the TK rollout.

Key Findings

Impacts of Transitional Kindergarten

The Committee sought to understand providers' experiences, challenges, and recommendations regarding UPK. Discussions focused on the impacts and implications of Transitional Kindergarten (TK), a significant change from the state that is now shaping San Mateo County's mixed delivery system.

Concerns

Center-based and FCC providers shared how the introduction of TK in public schools has impacted their programs. Many providers mentioned how TK has reduced their profit margins. In recent years, many have lowered their total enrollment or increased enrollment of younger children. With lower teacher-child ratios required for infants and toddlers,[3] providers described needing to hire more staff or decrease the total number of children they serve. Providers also described how TK has impacted their staffing. They have laid off staff due to declining enrollment, lost teachers who decided to work at TK programs for better benefits and hours with fewer requirements, and needed to hire less qualified staff to replace them.

Providers were also concerned that TK programs limit family choice. They explained how TK programs are free, creating a significant cost differential that incentivizes families to send their children to TK. Two center-based providers further noted that some school districts are telling families that they must enroll in TK in order to save a spot for kindergarten at their home school. Providers further noted that parents may have limited knowledge of early childhood education and development, leading to uninformed decisions about where to enroll their children.

Across focus groups, providers had varying levels of knowledge of TK programs. Several Mandarin-speaking providers did not know that public schools now offer a free year of TK for four-year-olds. In contrast, many center-based providers were very knowledgeable about TK programs and shared specific concerns regarding TK's quality and safety. For instance, many shared that they believe TK's emphasis on academics is not developmentally appropriate. Providers reported hearing that TK classes may not confirm whether authorized adults are picking up children after school and that children may be walking to the bathroom unattended. Providers also mentioned how TK's limited hours may pose a challenge for families.

Both FCC and center-based providers also expressed frustration at feeling excluded from the TK rollout, despite efforts to make their voices heard. Several highlighted how the concept of a mixed delivery system is nice in theory, but has not reflected their current reality, which, in their opinion, seems to favor TK over other options.

[3] Infants and toddlers include children ages 0 to 24 months.

This report describes VIVA's methodology for gathering and analyzing providers' input, then summarizes key learnings and presents recommendations.

Methodology

In April 2024, VIVA Social Impact Partners facilitated five focus groups for family child care home (FCC) providers and private center-based providers working in San Mateo County.[2] VIVA facilitated each 90-minute focus group via Zoom, and each participant received a $100 stipend for their participation. In total, 38 FCC providers and 20 center-based providers participated.

The three focus groups for FCC providers were each facilitated in a different language: English, Spanish, and Mandarin. They included both small and large FCCs that are non-Title 5 licensed and license-exempt. Participants included owners and assistant teachers, and programs had varied hours of operation. The two focus groups for center-based providers included directors and staff from privately funded, non-Title 5 licensed or license-exempt programs, including Head Start. Focus groups for center-based providers were offered in English only. 4Cs recruited all focus group participants and aimed to include providers from northern, central, and southern regions of the county. For a detailed breakdown of participant demographics by setting, see *Appendix I - Provider Demographics*.

VIVA developed focus group protocols to answer key "learning questions" developed by 4Cs (see *Appendix II - Learning Questions*). The learning questions guided the more detailed structure and questions of the focus group protocols (see *Appendix III - Protocol for FCCs* and *Appendix IV - Protocol for Centers*). After conducting all focus groups, VIVA analyzed and coded notes across sessions to identify themes and insights, including differences according to primary language (for FCC providers only) and setting (FCC providers vs. private center-based providers). Recommendations were also developed based on direct suggestions from providers and VIVA's understanding of key insights in the context of the Committee's work.

[2] Focus groups included FCC and private center-based providers because the UPK Mixed Delivery Planning Committee was interested in hearing the perspectives of non-Title 5 early learning programs.

Appendix 6 – Summary of UPK Recommendations Community Survey

The CCPC conducted an online survey from 8/2/24 to 9/3/24 to gather community input on the draft UPK Mixed Delivery System Planning Report recommendations. The survey was available in English, Spanish, and Chinese. 120 responses: 6 through the Parent link (provided to 4Cs), 41 through the Community link (shared to CCPC list), and 73 through Provider link (provided to 4Cs). 92 took survey in English, 20 in Spanish, and 8 in Chinese.

The recommendations that were rated the "Highest Priority" most frequently were:

- 1B - Community Partnerships: Foster a culture that promotes partnerships among all UPK providers –including Private Preschool, Family Child Care, Head Start, State Preschool, After School, and School Districts – to support UPK implementation that meets child and family needs. (86 of 119 (72%) ranked as "High Priority")
- 1C - Communications: Develop and implement a communications plan that informs families, UPK providers and Community about UPKMD options in a centralized, clear manner. (85 of 118 (72%) ranked as "High Priority")
- 2A - Recruitment: Support recruitment strategies that address workforce shortages in all UPKMD settings. (85 of 119 (71%) ranked as "High Priority")
- 3A – Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment: Prioritize implementation of research-based and evidence-validated preschool and TK curricula that support the learning and development of the whole child. (90 of 119 (76%) ranked as "High Priority")
- 4B – Funding: Maximize use of existing funding streams for UPKMD, and increase resources for UPKMD, so that every 3- and 4-year-old has access to a free or affordable UPKMD program of their choice. (92 of 120 (77%) ranked as "High Priority")
- 4C – Facilities: Support and enhance existing local efforts to ensure enough high-quality early learning facilities that meet local needs. (84 of 119 (71%) ranked as "High Priority")

One respondent said this in the open response under Q6, "I am concerned there are too many high priority items and we will have to focus as best as possible on fewer priorities."

After reviewing the recommendations, survey respondents were asked "What should our Advocacy priorities be? Check all that apply." The responses are below:

What should our Advocacy priorities be? Check all that apply.	Responses	
Increased wages for educators across the UPKMD system.	73.50%	86
More resources for all UPK settings, including family child care and center-based preschool, as UPK expands.	70.09%	82
Income-eligibility thresholds for subsidized programs that reflect local cost of living, not state median income or federal poverty level.	64.10%	75

Higher reimbursement rates for serving younger children.	62.39%	73
Increased resources for training and materials for providers who want to serve younger children.	60.68%	71
Credit given for prior ECE teaching experience in credentialing programs.	58.12%	68
More resources to support low ratios across the UPKMD system.	49.57%	58
Other (please specify)	8.55%	10
	Answered	**117**

The two priorities selected by the most people are:

- Increased wages for educators across the UPKMD system.
- More resources for all UPK settings, including family child care and center-based preschool, as UPK expands.

"Other" suggestions for Advocacy Priorities were:

- Supports specific to Family Child Care providers such as assistance implementing preschool curriculum, training around preschool curriculum, and financial support to offset tuition costs to make more affordable for families. It was also recommended that Family Child Care providers be represented in all planning meetings.
- A focus on increasing wages for the lowest paid educators.
- More resources for preschool teachers who have been forced out of the early childhood workforce due to changes.
- Play-based education and allowing private programs to choose their curriculum.
- Trainings, materials and resources available in Chinese languages.

Finally, the survey asked, "What is missing from the UPK Mixed Delivery Recommendations?" 26 respondents provided suggestions for what is missing.

The major themes were:

- Foster more communication among various providers (i.e. school districts, private preschools, family child care, etc.). Private programs want to better understand school district plans so that they can make their business plans accordingly.
- Intentionally include Family Child Care in UPK planning.
- Address concerns that there is a "downward academic push" that is not developmentally appropriate for 3 and 4 year olds; promote play-based approach.
- Provide avenues for existing private programs, including Family Child Care, to participate in UPK.

- Acknowledge expertise of existing child care providers: “No somos cuidadoras sino educadoras enfocadas en la enseñanza.(We are not caregivers, but educators focused on teaching.)”
- Address the challenges of existing providers who have open spaces for preschoolers. Consider that some of these programs also serve infants & toddlers. If they close due to low enrollment in preschool (financial viability) then infant/toddler spaces are also lost.
- Provide more funding to increase access, include more types of preschool providers, support sliding scale or scholarships for families who don’t qualify for subsidy, but need child care and can’t afford private care.
- Support young children with special needs, or who are neurodiverse, to be included in UPK. Also increase wages for educators who serve children with disabilities.
- Provide information in Chinese so that Chinese-speaking educators can give feedback on the plan and be included in the design.
- Develop common safety regulations across all of the UPKMD system. Currently, programs fall under a variety of regulations.
- Increase afterschool care for children enrolled in TK whose parents are working and need care until 5-6pm.

