

# Early Care and Education



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“What are Connecticut’s chances? It’s all about the kids and their preparation.”

– Coach Calhoun



All athletes are competitive by nature. They all have the will to win. What separates the winners from the runners-up is the will to prepare to win. We all want Connecticut’s children to be safe and healthy and show up on that first day of school ready to learn and succeed in life. Because we all know that Connecticut’s future is riding on it. The question is, do we have the will to make sure our kids are prepared for the challenges and opportunities ahead?

## Moment of Victory

All children begin kindergarten ready and eager for formal learning.



## Team Stats That Cut It

- Children with two years of preschool were twice as likely to be seen as ready for kindergarten in language, literacy skills and math skills than their peers without preschool.
- Children with two years of preschool were one and a half times as likely to be seen as ready for kindergarten in social/emotional and fine motor skills than their peers without preschool.
- For every dollar invested in quality preschool, Connecticut saves nearly \$20.



## Game Situation

So much of the way children will learn in school is decided before they ever walk through the kindergarten door – research on early childhood proves it. In fact, a child’s brain develops up to 90 percent of its capacity by age five. In Connecticut, our goal is for all children to have the opportunity for a great beginning! Because that leads to much happier endings for all of us.

### Create the conditions for winning.

What a young child does in the course of a day influences how he or she will learn throughout life. Good early care and education provides children with comfort, fun, appropriate interaction with adults and peers, and an active play environment.

Children can thrive at home with a parent, relative or caregiver. Children can also thrive in family day care, center based care and school readiness settings.

The important thing is that young children need to be in safe, nurturing, stimulating settings where they can thrive and learn. The setting needs to meet the child at his or her level, while also maintaining high standards for safety, health, and language development.



No child care or poor quality care is harmful for children, especially for those most vulnerable.

## “Full Court Press” Game Plan

With preparation, a child begins school with high self-esteem and a love for learning. In addition, a “school- ready” child respects adults and other children, shares with others, and can focus on kindergarten activities. Attendance and achievement both improve. Success builds on success. That’s the winning formula for Connecticut. Here’s the game plan to achieve it.

### What parents can do

- Call the state’s 211 Infoline to find out where licensed child care providers and early learning centers are located. These providers meet all requirements for safety. Licensing is only for the facility and does not provide information about the quality of teaching. Ask if the center you choose is accredited as a high quality setting.
- Visit providers to see for yourself whether they’re right for your child. Look for a welcoming feeling, cleanliness, a plan for each day, books and songs. Observe how they support and nurture the young children in their care.
- Notice if the ratio of providers to children is sufficient (one teacher for 10 children ages three and four and one teacher for four children ages six weeks to 36 months).
- Is the size of the group appropriate for the age of the child? (younger children require smaller group sizes).
- Trust what you see, hear and feel when you visit a program to select care for your child. You know best what is right for your child.



## What schools and communities can do

- Make sure you know how many families in your community need an early care and education program for their children. Assess the need and develop the supply.
- Support the early childhood programs in your community, integrate them into the community and assist them in a quality improvement process.
- Work with your school readiness councils, Discovery group, parent groups and businesses in your community to identify and address what parents need and want.
- Ensure that there is curriculum and standards alignment with strong linkages between early childhood programs and their staff and the staff in the elementary schools.

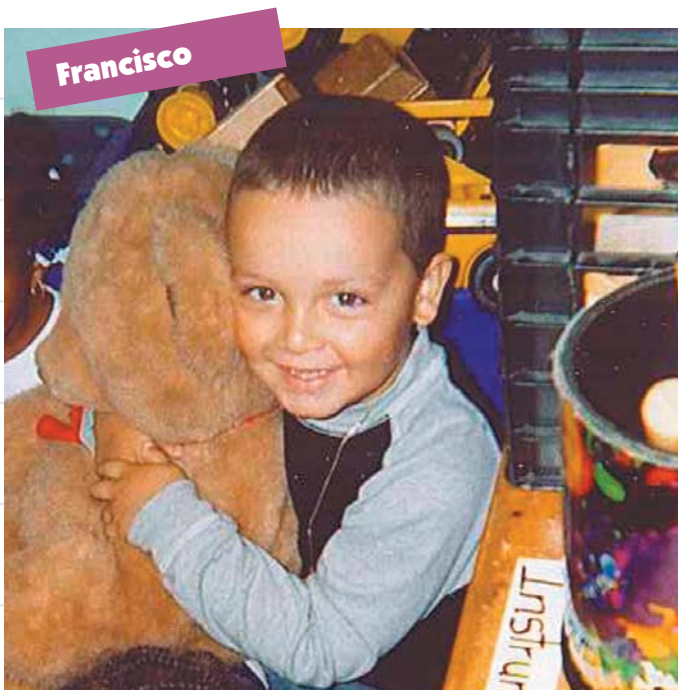
## What policymakers can do

- Require that all early childhood programs meet quality standards, implement curriculum that adheres to the appropriate curriculum framework and provide high quality staff.
- Support high quality preschool for every three- and four-year-old child in Connecticut. National research shows the outcome of preschool does not endure without good teacher training, small class size, health and safety protection and an understanding of early language and literacy development.
- Ensure that parents who need to go to work, job-train, or school can enroll their infants, toddlers, and two- three- and four-year-olds in high quality child care programs.
- Continue to fund research and training on best practices with good child outcomes in early learning.
- Identify those most at risk and prioritize services to those most in need.

## Ready to Learn

Three-year-old Francisco didn't want to go to preschool. He cried his first few days, hiding his face when the teacher tried to talk to him.

"It was so hard to leave him even though I knew it was for his own good," said his mom, Denise. "When his teacher asked me what he liked, I said 'music.'"



So, Francisco was allowed to bring his Walkman and listen to gospel music, which calmed him. He discovered that he liked the dramatic play section of the room, where he could pretend to be a chef and make pancakes. Soon, when Denise and Francisco arrived at the classroom door, he'd say, "Bye Mom, have a nice day!"

When he advanced to the four-year-old room, Denise says he "opened up like a flower!" Francisco learned every letter of the alphabet and their sounds, days of the week and months, how to write his first name, and that books had authors and illustrators. He also learned to behave well in the group and pay attention to the teacher.

"When it was time to enter kindergarten, Francisco was ready," said Denise. "And excited!"

Already familiar with letters, he quickly caught on to the rhyming and reading lessons. Now, Francisco displays his mastery of what it takes to read every day; he helps his mom make the grocery list and spells the word 'stop' in the sign. And, he thinks Fernando would be a good name for his new baby brother, because it starts with 'F' like his name.

"About 35 percent of middle class children and 40 to 50 percent of poor children enter kindergarten not ready for school. And one reason is that children are not getting high enough quality child care."

-Edward Zigler

## Read More About Early Care and Education

### **Opening the Kindergarten Door**

This publication, from the Connecticut Commission on Children, summarizes a survey of Connecticut kindergarten teachers to determine how many children enter kindergarten ready for school. Download it at [www.cga.ct.gov/coc](http://www.cga.ct.gov/coc) or call (860) 240-0290 to order.

### **First Words, First Steps:**

#### **The Importance of the Early Years**

This report, prepared for the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet, contains recommendations for developing a statewide system of infant and toddler care. Download it at [www.ecpolicycouncil.org/cabinet.php](http://www.ecpolicycouncil.org/cabinet.php) or call (860) 240-0290 to order.

#### **Ready by Five & Fine by Nine**

Published in October 2006, this is the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet's suggested framework for early childhood education. Download it at [www.ecpolicycouncil.org/cabinet.php](http://www.ecpolicycouncil.org/cabinet.php) or call (860) 240-0290 to order.

### **The Connecticut**

#### **State Department of Education**

Visit the department's website at [www.sde.ct.gov](http://www.sde.ct.gov) and click on the Parents & Community category in the left column. You'll next see a series of categories, including Early Childhood Education, which contains a number of useful documents. The phone number of the Early Childhood Education Bureau is (860) 713-6571.

### **The Connecticut**

#### **Department of Public Health**

DPH is responsible for the licensing of child day care centers in Connecticut. It maintains a list of licensed providers, along with parent guidelines for choosing a center, on its website: [www.ct.gov/dph](http://www.ct.gov/dph). Click on Parents & Children in the left column, then on Child Day Care in the center column.

If you have a complaint concerning a day care operation, there's a hotline number: (860) 509-8045. But if the matter concerns child abuse or neglect, call the Department of Children and Families hotline at 1-800-842-2288 immediately.

# NOTES

