



# Summer Pre-K Planning Guide

Developing a Quality School Readiness Program



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## Greetings!

The Summer Pre-K Planning Guide was created in Spring of 2014 to assist programs that may be considering implementing a summer preschool program. Drawing upon over thirteen years of experience overseeing the implementation of summer preschool programs throughout eleven school districts in Alameda County, F5AC has created this guide as a culmination of all of the lessons learned in developing a high quality, short-term intervention program that supports closing the achievement gap through intentional, healthy transitions.

Studies have proven that achievement gaps between children living in low income communities and those in more affluent areas already exist by Kindergarten. Children from low-income families are more likely to start school with limited language skills, health problems, and social and emotional problems that impede their learning. The larger the gap at school entry, the harder it is to close. It is F5AC's mission to make wise investments in the early years in order to support healthy transitions and the optimal development of young children as they grow into healthy and productive adults.

We hope that you find this publication to be helpful and informative as you embark upon your journey to support our county's youngest residents.

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# Introduction

## Summer Pre-K Programs work!

A Summer Pre-K (SPK) program is a low-cost investment with beneficial outcomes for both children and parents. Since its inception in 2001, the First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) SPK program expanded from 6 classrooms in 2 districts to 37 classrooms in 11 school districts in 2013. Over 6,000 children have participated in the SPK program since its launch 13 years ago.

There is an abundance of research in the field that points to the importance of preparing children for school and how school readiness programs help children build the social and emotional skills necessary for academic success in Kindergarten and beyond. Summer preschool programs offer enormous early learning opportunities to children that are cost-effective, evidenced-based, and help

narrow achievement gaps prior to children entering school.

Multiple evaluations of F5AC's SPK program conducted between 2001 and 2013 evidence the success of the program. School Readiness data

collected and analyzed by Applied Survey Research (ASR), consistently shows that children who participate in F5AC's SPK program are as prepared for Kindergarten as peers who have attended preschool or were in licensed child care in three of the four domains of readiness (Self-Regulation, Social

Expression and Self-Care & Motor Skills). A High/Scope Educational Research Foundation analysis of program results in 2001 found that children participating in the F5AC SPK program made statistically significant gains in language and literacy, initiative and social skills.

**Components of School Readiness**

- Emotional Well-Being & Social Competence
- Approaches to Learning
- Communicative Skills
- Cognition & General Knowledge Skills
- Health & Physical Development

# The SPK Program Model

With over a decade of experience implementing a SPK program, F5AC has identified the following basic components as essential elements in providing an effective SPK program:

- A 5-6 week, part-time SPK program model provides quality transitional, early childhood experiences for children without prior preschool or formal child care experience who are entering Kindergarten in the Fall. The program is generally run from Monday through Thursday in order to familiarize children to the standard school week.
- The SPK program is generally co-taught by preschool and Kindergarten teachers, to support a smooth transition from Early Childhood Education to the standard curriculum of the K-12 system. Emphasis is placed upon familiarizing children with the basic expectations for Kindergarten, such as following a structured schedule, standing in line, and raising their hand.
- For parents, the program should include a minimum of five (5) hours of mandatory parent education opportunities that support a smooth transition to school and help to enhance the parent's awareness of children's social and emotional development, as well as provide them with linkages to community supports and resources.

## Basic Program Model

- **5-6 weeks in length, 3 to 3.5 hours per day, 4 days per week**
- **Two teachers per classroom (preschool teacher or teachers aid and a kindergarten teacher)**
- **One teacher is bilingual and matches the language needs of children in the classroom**
- **Curriculum should emphasize social and emotional development through play as a critical component of school readiness**
- **1:9 teacher-child ratios. Maximum 18 children and a minimum of 16 per classroom**
- **A minimum of five (5) hours of parent education which should include topics such as school readiness, health and nutrition and literacy.**



# Planning for an SPK Program

## Determining Need and Capacity

How does one determine if their community needs an SPK program? By asking the questions listed on the right, your agency can better gauge the necessity of a SPK program.

Once the need to implement an SPK program has been assessed, how does one know if district or community leadership will support the effort and more importantly, if there is the capacity or infrastructure in place to support the effort? The following components and infrastructure issues must be addressed prior to the implementation of an SPK program:

### **Determine adequate funding to sustain your SPK program:**

Identify funding to sustain staff positions and SPK program components. If applicable, funding can be leveraged through Title 1 monies, as well as through in-kind resources.

## Assessing the Need for an SPK Program

- ◆ Are there other preschool programs in the community such as Head Start, State Preschool or private programs? Do these programs have waiting lists?
- ◆ Is there an overall shortage of preschool programs in the community?
- ◆ Do Kindergarten teachers report having a significant number of children in their classrooms without prior preschool experience?
- ◆ Have parents of entering Kindergarten children been surveyed at Kindergarten registration events to assess the level of need in the school district or community?
- ◆ Do survey results suggest that there may be a sufficient number of children eligible for an SPK program?

# Planning for an SPK Program

## **Determine location of program sites and classrooms:**

School-based Kindergarten classrooms are the best environments for Summer Pre-K programs. Children and families will have the opportunity to become familiar with the school campus and the logistics of the Kindergarten classroom. However, successful programs can be held in preschool classrooms, 1<sup>st</sup> grade classrooms, community recreation centers or in empty portables, provided that appropriate materials and furniture are available.

## **Determine the dates and hours of the program:**

It is recommended that a program run for at least 3 hours per day, 4 days per week for a minimum of 5 weeks in order to successfully support children through the transition to Kindergarten. Not only is the number of hours in the program important, but so is the weekly routine of returning to school each Monday morning. The repeated transition from home to school each week helps children and families become familiar with the school year routine.

## **Determining Your Agency's Capacity for SPK**

- ◆ **Funding has been identified to sustain staff positions and SPK program components. If applicable, funding is leveraged thru Title 1 monies, as well as through in-kind resources.**
- ◆ **There is consistent and stable staffing such as a program coordinator, to oversee the program and serve as the bridge between ECE providers and Kindergarten teachers.**
- ◆ **There are solid and well-established partnerships for service integration, continuity and collaboration.**
- ◆ **There are safe, developmentally appropriate Pre-K and/or Kindergarten classroom(s) available to host the summer program.**
- ◆ **There is an on-site administrator available to oversee the daily operations of the SPK program.**
- ◆ **There are support staff available, such as custodial or clerical.**

## **Determine a hiring process for SPK program staff:**

Every district or agency has unique hiring procedures. Teachers for the SPK program are generally recruited and hired through the district or agency-specific Human Resources protocols.



# Summer Pre-K Staffing Model

The recommended SPK program model uses low teacher to child ratios, bilingual teachers, a team-teaching approach, a site administrator and an SPK program coordinator to oversee the day-to-day program operations.

Consistent and stable staffing is one of the primary factors that will determine the success of the SPK program. Early planning and the development of a staffing plan will help to define roles, expectations and time and work

commitments. Programs that are able to sustain an SPK coordinator long-term tend to operate smoother because the coordinator serves as the primary contact person for school readiness activities, trouble-shoots program concerns, such as

teacher time-off, and facilitates communication for all levels of program staff.

**Program Administration:** An administrator should be engaged to oversee the smooth operation of the SPK site(s), and to be available and accessible in the event of an emergency.

**Program Coordinator:** A Program Coordinator helps to ensure that program requirements are met, teachers are supported, families are engaged, and Kindergarten transition supports are in place.

**Classrooms with more educated and trained teachers scored better on quality indicators such as child-teacher and children’s social interactions, children’s interactions with learning materials, and environmental features that support those interactions.\***

**Classroom Teachers:** In a high-quality SPK program, the staff to child ratios should not exceed 1:9, with no more than 18 children per classroom. Research shows that the most effective early childhood teachers have a four-year degree with specialized training in teaching young children.

\*Howes, C., & Smith, E. W. (1995). Relations among child care quality, teacher behavior, children's play activities, emotional security, and cognitive activity in child care. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 10(4), 381-404.

Each SPK classroom should have at least two qualified teachers. Ideally, this consists of a credentialed Kindergarten teacher and a Preschool Teacher with a minimum of 24 ECE units. At least one classroom teacher should be bilingual, with language skills matching the needs of SPK children. A team-teaching model is encouraged in order to fully utilize each teacher's area of expertise and support a smooth transition into the K-12 system. Teaching staff should work the entire length of the program so that each child can develop a stable and secure relationship with their teacher.

### **Planning Time and Compensation**

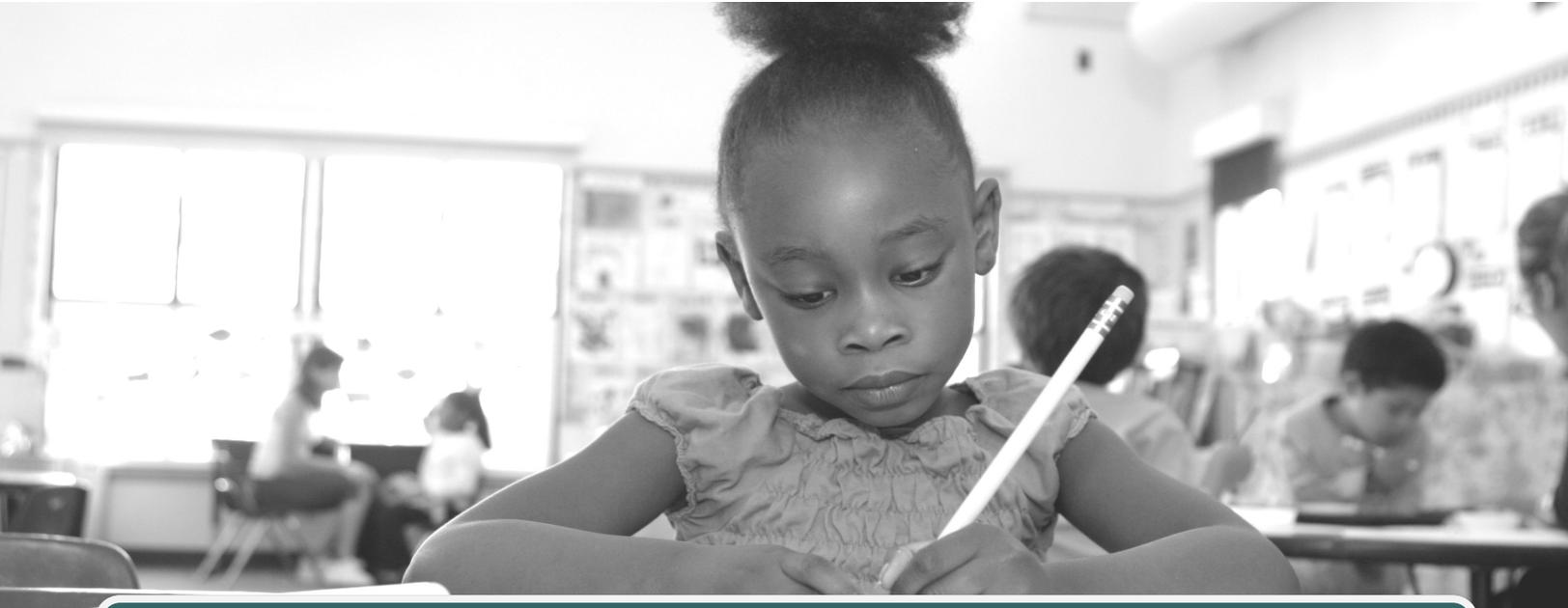
- Teachers should engage in SPK curriculum and lesson planning several times prior to program launch.
- Teachers should be given ample time to prepare their classrooms, finalize summer plans, contact families and to confirm Open House attendance (see page 12) prior to the start of the program.
- Teachers should be compensated for all teaching hours as well as prep time.

### **Training and Orientation**

- Held prior to the program launch, an orientation for teachers and staff is typically facilitated by the SPK Coordinator. This orientation provides time for teachers to bond, create team lesson plans, discuss logistics and parent outreach as well as the program's philosophy.

- A training component can take place within the orientation to provide support to staff in such areas as implementing developmental screenings (see page 19), the program's referral process for children who may need additional supports, and environmental rating scales such as APEEC (see page 14).





# Outreach

Identifying and recruiting SPK eligible children is one of the most important activities during the early phases of program implementation. A strong outreach and marketing strategy is vital to a successful SPK program. Developing and implementing an outreach and communications plan for the program takes work and collaboration, but it is a worthy effort to ensure cohesive program delivery. Community-based approaches should be implemented to inform parents about the program. Some outreach strategies include:

- Program information and marketing materials are easily accessible to families and available in multiple languages.
- Outreach begins early in the school year and also takes place during Kindergarten registration.
- Outreach materials are distributed to targeted

school sites and at principal and teacher meetings.

- Information about the program is distributed to local pediatricians, health clinics, public health nurses, and family support and social service agencies.

**Children who attend a high-quality early learning program gain four months of learning, on average.\***

- Collaborate with local early childhood organizations in order to identify and recruit SPK children. Head Start, State

Preschool and Transitional Kindergarten (TK) programs typically have waiting lists of children eligible for the SPK program. In addition, these programs can provide information about the SPK program as an alternative placement for children ineligible for their services.

- Outreach to local Resource and Referral agencies to offer an option for families who express a need for preschool or child care services.

\* Ahmad, F. Z, and Hamm, K. (2013) The School Readiness Gap and Preschool Benefits for Children of Color. Children for American Progress. Retrieved from: <http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/PreschoolBenefits-brief-2.pdf>

# Enrollment

Developing a streamlined, family friendly enrollment process for the SPK program can reduce frustration for the parent and for responsible program staff.

Working closely with agency or district staff to combine SPK enrollment with existing Kindergarten enrollment procedures has been a successful strategy to efficiently and quickly identify, recruit, and enroll SPK eligible children.

## **Some effective strategies to support the enrollment process are:**

- Develop a separate SPK enrollment packet to be used in conjunction with any district or agency enrollment forms. This ensures that families are aware of the unique features of the SPK program and have actively agreed to participate.
- Additional documents in the enrollment packet may include an overview of the SPK program, and immunization records.
- Enrollment forms should be provided in the primary language of the parents/families.
- Enrollment forms can include emergency contact information as well.
- School districts may require children to be

enrolled in Kindergarten and have up-to-date immunization records prior to enrolling in the SPK program.

- Forms are typically returned to either the school site or a district/agency SPK coordinator who then confirms enrollment in the program.
- In some cases, it may be appropriate to submit completed enrollment forms to funding agencies

## **Enrollment Questions to Consider**

- **Who will be the primary SPK enrollment contact?**
- **Will enrollment be centralized or site-based?**
- **Is the program limited to children entering the hosting school, or are children from other neighborhoods welcome?**
- **How will priority be determined and who will manage the SPK program wait-list?**
- **What staff need to be involved in and/or aware of the program and enrollment process and procedures?**

or the school district for tracking and data collection purposes.

- Provide informational sessions early in the year when school districts and parents are preparing for and holding kindergarten registration events.
- Be prepared to offer one-on-one assistance to families with completing enrollment forms during Kindergarten open house or registration events.

- Plan for an Open House event, typically held the week before the program begins, where children and families can visit the classrooms, meet teachers, finalize paperwork, and receive information about the first day.
- Confirm SPK enrollment with families by phone, in person, or with a welcome and acceptance letter.



# Basic Building Blocks of Readiness

A high quality SPK program strives to develop a strong social and emotional foundation to prepare children for the transition to Kindergarten and future school success while recognizing the unique needs of each individual child.

Analyses of the school readiness assessment data from Applied Survey Research has consistently found evidence of four primary dimensions of readiness (subsequently named the *Basic Building Blocks* of readiness), including the following:

- **Self-Care & Motor Skills** include those skills needed for taking care of one's basic needs or skills showing fine and gross motor coordination;
- **Self-Regulation** skills include basic emotion regulation and self-control skills that are needed to be able to perform well in the classroom;

- **Social Expression** skills include abilities related to children's interactions with others, their capacity to express themselves in the classroom context, and their engagement with play and learning; and



**Kindergarten Academics** skills represent the “nuts and bolts” skills that are more academic in nature and tend to be explicitly taught to children at home, in early care settings, and in Kindergarten.

Since play is an essential component of the learning process, SPK programs are encouraged to embed a variety

of hands-on “play” experiences into their curriculum. Children need extended periods during the day when they can freely choose from a variety of activities, offered in a variety of learning areas or centers. A balance between child-directed free choice activities and limited teacher-directed activities are key to a successful Summer Pre-K Program.

# Assessing & Ensuring Quality

Classroom environments should support a developmentally appropriate curriculum. Typically, the SPK program is held in a Kindergarten classroom on a school site, which offers exposure to an environment similar to the one children will experience in the fall. If a Kindergarten classroom is not available, a preschool or other suitable classroom is appropriate.

## Environment

There are a multitude of research-based tools that can be used to assess the environmental quality of the classroom. Due to the condensed nature of the SPK program, the Assessment of Practices in Early Elementary Classrooms (**APEEC**) has been widely used by the F5AC Summer Pre-K program. Developed originally for use in early elementary classrooms, the tool offers an objective and consistent way to measure the quality of Summer Pre-K classrooms. The APEEC assesses the physical, instructional and social environments for children, and supports teacher's use of best practices in the classroom. It is recommended that training on this tool be provided for SPK teachers prior to the start of the program and that assessments of SPK classrooms be completed within the first week of instruction.

## Effective teacher-student interactions can be supported by:

**Emotional Support** – Positive relationships among teachers and peers

**Classroom Organization** – Well-managed classrooms that provide students with frequent, engaging learning activities

**Instructional Support** – Interactions that teach students to think, provide ongoing feedback and support, and facilitate language and vocabulary

Collectively, teaching staff and administrators can review and discuss the results of the APEEC, focusing on the strengths of the program while also identifying potential areas for growth and improvement.

## Materials

Instructional materials are important to creating stimulating, play-based and appropriate learning opportunities for children.

The SPK program should offer a variety of high quality materials that support and meet the developmental needs of children who lack exposure to a preschool environment (see Appendix A for a list of suggested materials).

## Instruction

Consistent evidence suggests that to improve students' academic achievement and social skill development, we need to focus on the nature and quality of teacher-student interactions.

\* Positive student-teacher relationships draw students into the process of learning, provided that the content material of the class is engaging and age appropriate. Teachers who foster positive relationships with their students create classroom environments more conducive to learning and better able to meet students' developmental, emotional and academic needs.

\*Andrew Mashburn, Robert Pianta, Bridget Hamre, Jason Downer, Oscar Barbarin, Donna Bryant, Margaret Burchinal, Richard Clifford, Diane Early, and Carrollee Howes (2008). "Measures of Classroom Quality in Pre-Kindergarten and Children's Development of Academic, Language, and Social Skills," *Child Development*, 79, pages 732-749.



# Family Engagement & Communication

For many participating parents, the SPK program is their first experience away from their child, and perhaps their first experience interacting with a formal school setting. Consequently, it is an opportune time to build and establish positive routines, open up communication and support a collaborative approach to educating children.

**Weekly Newsletters:** Provide an overview of weekly activities, tips for extending learning into the home and reminders of upcoming events.

Written materials should be appropriately translated for families who speak languages other than English.

**One-on-One:** Parents benefit from face-to-face communication and interactions with teachers, which is an excellent way to begin establishing

rapport. SPK program teachers are encouraged to engage and communicate with parents during drop-off and pick-up times, and share the child's milestones and experiences each day.

**Parent Education:** Summer Pre-K programs typically offer a minimum of 5 hours of parent

education sessions during the course

of the SPK program. Sessions occur on the school site, during SPK program hours, in multiple languages and often provide child care for younger siblings,

refreshments and a comfortable setting for parents and caregivers to

come together and prepare for the transition to Kindergarten.

Community agencies such as libraries, public health departments and other non-profits often offer free parent education programs on site.

**When schools acknowledge the relevance of children's homes and cultures and promote family involvement, they can develop a supportive environment for learning through meaningful activities that engage and empower families.\***

\*Ramey, Craig T., & Ramey, Sharon L. (1999). Beginning school for children at risk. In Robert C. Pianta & Martha J. Cox, *The transition to kindergarten* (pp. 217-252). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

## My Child's Summer Pre-K Experience

Kindergarten teachers or school district staff to provide workshops specific to Kindergarten and what to expect during the transition. School district Adult Education programs are another free resource and can sometimes provide a series of appropriate workshops to parents. (See Appendix B for possible topics)

**Parent-Teacher Conferences:** SPK program's can provide parent-teacher conferences as a forum for communicating with parents about their child's school progress over the course of the short program. This type of communication can shape parents' attitudes and encourage their involvement during the course of their child's educational journey.

**Volunteering Opportunities:** Establishing classroom and teacher-parent dynamics sets the foundation for parent involvement and communication. Parents can be encouraged to be a part of their child's education by volunteering in the classroom, or on fieldtrips, or provide classroom lesson planning supports.

**Special Events:** Completing the Summer Pre-K program can be a time to celebrate. SPK programs may consider holding a special event recognizing this achievement while emphasizing the child's next leap into kindergarten. Programs have held potlucks, 'graduation' ceremonies or parties at neighborhood parks. If possible, programs may invite the future Kindergarten teachers of the children and provide parents and children an opportunity to informally get to know the school staff.



*"Truly, this summer program prepared my child before entering kindergarten. My child is now more comfortable in a class setting and confident and excited to meet new friends and learn new things. I'm so grateful to have this Pre-K program."  
Parent-Berkeley Unified School District, 2012*

*"He (my child) has learned more and he is more interested in books, reading, letters and numbers. He loved everything about it. Mostly making new friends. He really liked his teachers."  
Parent-Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District, 2012*

*"The program was run very effectively and my daughter learned a lot in a short period of time. All the teachers and assistants were very dedicated."  
Parent-Castro Valley Unified School District SPK Program 2011*

*"I think this program is great. The parent meetings were very informative. I also liked that it lead into group (parent) discussions."  
Parent-San Lorenzo Unified School district, 2011*



# Health & Wellness

A child's readiness for school reaches far beyond traditional classroom activities. When a child is absent from school due to poor health, it limits and disrupts a child's ability to attain important social and academic skills. This is one of the

many reasons why health is important to school readiness.

Good physical health enables children to engage, physically and mentally, in learning. Adding health and wellness as a core component to early learning

systems will ensure that children are screened, diagnosed and treated early for chronic health issues that may impact their learning. The linkage between education and health is also essential for parents, who may need additional supports and services to respond to the health needs of their children.

**Poor children from birth to age five are twice as likely as more affluent children to be obese, about a third more likely to be anemic, and about 20 percent more likely to be deficient in vitamin A.\***

## Physical Health

Children depend upon adults to make healthy choices for them, and to teach them how to make healthy choices for themselves. The SPK program

provides parent workshops to educate parents about the relationship between physical health and school readiness. Parents learn about the risks of unhealthy snacking and sugar consumption, and the impact of tooth decay on a child's ability to

learn and thrive. Parents and health care providers in the community share the responsibility in promoting health. Linking parents with health care resources in the community and helping them establish a medical home for their children has the potential to reduce reliance on emergency or hospital care while promoting strong preventive and primary care.

\*Currie, J. (2005) Health Disparities and Gaps in School Readiness. *The Future of Children*, 15(1) pg. 125.

**Some strategies to support the optimal physical development of children enrolled in SPK programs are:**

- Host Health and Fitness Fairs, in partnership with public health programs, pediatric hospitals, insurance providers and community-based clinics, to share with families resources and information about immunizations, physical and developmental disabilities, oral health and mental health services.
- Develop collaborative partnerships with child health providers and organizations to provide a mobile immunization clinic at the SPK school sites.
- Offer on-site health insurance enrollment supports to establish a medical home for children so that they can have consistent and routine care.
- Provide on-site vision and hearing screenings for the early identification of issues that may impede a child's ability to learn.
- Provide developmental screenings of children enrolled in the SPK program in order to identify early signs of developmental concerns such as speech and language and cognitive delays.
- Provide well-balanced meals including a healthy breakfast, snacks and/or lunch.
- Provide guidance on consistent meal routines

**Children lose nearly 51 million school hours each year due to dental-related illness.**

**Children from low-income families have nearly 12 times as many missed school days because of dental problems compared to children from higher income families.\***

such as hand washing and the proper use of utensils. Use snack and mealtimes to model good table manners and introduce children to the school lunch routine.

- Promote a social, 'family style' setting with opportunities for social interaction.

**Oral Health**

Oral health is a very important part of overall health and is related to school readiness. When left untreated, poor oral health can affect a child's ability to learn and develop. Tooth decay and other related dental issues can be prevented and school readiness

programs can provide a unique opportunity to promote and support good oral health for children. A child with poor dental health is likely to have difficulty in school and may develop other health and development issues such as poor nutrition, sleep deprivation, attention problems and

delayed social development. Strategies that promote and support good oral health can include:

- On-site dental screenings in partnership with local public health dental programs and clinics.
- Support and information to parents about the importance of healthy teeth, the impact of poor oral hygiene on school-aged children and what to do when dental issues arise.

\*Holt K, Kraft K. (2003). Oral Health and Learning: When Children's Health Suffers, So Does Their Health. Washington, DC: National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center.



# Universal Screening

Early identification of developmental and social-emotional concerns offers the best hope of early intervention and optimal outcomes for young children. The F5AC SPK program has supported the use of the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ) and the Ages and Stages-Social/Emotional Questionnaires (ASQ-SE) as a way to identify, early on, developmental and behavioral issues that may impede the optimal development of a child.

**Developmental delays, learning disorders, or behavioral and social-emotional problems are estimated to affect 1 in every 6 children.\***

Implementing a universal screening protocol is a desirable goal for any SPK program to ensure that at-risk children are identified prior to their entrance into Kindergarten.

Some suggested strategies to support universal screening within an SPK program are:

- Create a district or agency wide policy supporting universal screening.

- Determine the most appropriate screening tool for your program.
- Train all teachers and staff in the use of the chosen screening tool.
  - Train all teachers and staff to assist parents in completing a developmental screening tool.
  - Host screening events to assist parents in completing a developmental screening.
- Develop a referral protocol for those children that have been identified with developmental and/or behavioral concerns.
- Develop a pipeline of communication with Kindergarten programs and school districts to ensure that supports are put into place prior to an identified child's entrance into the K-12 system.

\*Dunkle, M. (Fall 2004). High Quality Developmental Screening. *Developmental & Behavioral News*, 13(2). Retrieved December 16, 2005, from <http://www.dbpeds.org/articles/detail.cfm?id=373>

# Support for Children with Special Needs

Once a child has been screened and areas of concern have been identified, SPK programs are then looked to as a vital support by families. There are several avenues through which an SPK program can ensure that their families are supported:

**Referrals:** When children have a developmental concern, they may need referrals to local agencies for assessments, services or supports to best meet their individual needs.

Agencies offering SPK should either have a referral system in place or collaborate with other community agencies to provide this service. Staff should be trained to identify appropriate referrals and family navigation supports.

**Collaboration:** SPK programs should always strive to build collaboration across county agencies, community-based organizations and individual providers to ensure that their efforts are informed and coordinated with other systems of care already in place in the county. Of particular importance is to develop relationships with local school districts and become familiar with their referral process,

timelines, and the appropriate staff to contact to support a smooth transition into the K-12 system.

**Communication:** Agencies should also strive to employ multilingual staff who are trained to answer parents' questions about children's learning, behavior and development. These staff members should work to help families understand screening results and to determine next steps for early

intervention. Programs should provide parents with comprehensive information about services and supports available in Alameda County for children 0-5 years.

**Family Support:** For families that want additional support, trained staff should be available to work individually with families and help them

get connected to services and supports for their child and their family. Staff should also coordinate with agencies on behalf of families, help with interpretation, and follow-up to see how the child and family are doing, offering additional support if needed.

**Children who receive early treatment for developmental delays are more likely to graduate from high school, hold jobs, live independently, and avoid teen pregnancy, delinquency, and violent crime, which results in a savings to society of about \$30,000 to \$100,000 per child.\***

\*Glascoe, F. P., Shapiro, H. L. (2004, May 27). Introduction to Developmental and Behavioral Screening. *developmental behavioral pediatrics online*. Retrieved December 16, 2005, from <http://www.dbpeds.org/articles/detail.cfm?id=5>



# Embracing Culture & Diversity

A quality SPK program provides a welcoming environment for all families and children through a high quality classroom and teaching environment. A culturally responsive SPK program should strive to provide the following:

- Varied teaching strategies to help all children learn, regardless of language proficiency. Children are most successful when they have multiple opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills, including non-verbal activities, so that they do not feel limited by language.
- At least one bilingual teacher, representative of the predominant language, present in each classroom.
- Classroom activities in various languages are integrated throughout the day as deemed appropriate.
- Additional staff, if necessary, to support parents and children who speak languages other than the predominant languages. A bilingual office staff person, or classroom parents acting as interpreters are not sufficient.
- All information and resources for families should be provided in the languages used by families and reflected in the classroom and in multiple modalities. Printed materials may work for some, but will not necessarily reach all families equally. Verbal, written and multi-media approaches to communication will increase the likelihood that all families receive similar and useful information.
- Interpretation services offered during enrollment and orientation events, parent education sessions and parent engagement activities.
- A culturally responsive program that actively involves the parents and community it serves, while striving to make families feel that their cultural norms are valued and an asset to their child's success. In addition to bilingual books and materials, the curriculum should engage and include families in classroom activities to promote the special role they have in their child's learning.

# Optional Program Components

Summer Pre-K programs may opt to include a variety of supplemental program components to enhance the overall experience for children and families in the program. Some examples of enhanced program components may include:

- Classroom visits or field trips including story time at the local library, a mobile zoo presentation, museum visits, or a music performance by local artists.
- School Readiness Backpacks which include all necessary school supplies and fun activities to do at home for distribution on the last day of program.
- A weekly take-home book bag/literacy program for families to do at home together.
- Coordination of health fair or related activities including distribution of toothbrushes for each child in the SPK program.
- Child passports for each child that are forwarded to their Kindergarten teacher that reflect their progress in the SPK program.
- Kindergarten Early Care and Education Collaborative (K-ECE) to encourage communication between ECE providers, preschool teachers and Kindergarten teachers and to serve as a platform for program, lesson, and transition to kindergarten planning.

- Year-round school readiness activities to promote transition to kindergarten and help parents with Kindergarten enrollment and ensure a smooth school transition.





# Funding an SPK Program

Organizations that can leverage resources and community partnerships have the capacity to implement a viable SPK program. Securing funding to support an SPK program can be a daunting task and perhaps one of the biggest challenges organizations face, particularly when there are budget constraints. It is important to first identify the various costs associated with operating an SPK program to help guide and inform funding decisions and options.

During the period of 2001 through 2013, the estimated direct program cost for running an SPK program was approximately \$11,000 per classroom. However, costs can vary and depend upon a host of other factors such as school district and union salary structures, inflation, and the ability to leverage district funds and in-kind services. Costs typically include:

- **Personnel Expenses:** includes salaries and benefits for staff running the SPK program. It is important to include costs for time spent doing outreach and enrollment, classroom preparation,

and orientations and trainings.

- **Program Materials:** includes necessary materials to create a developmentally appropriate learning environment. It is recommended that purchases be based on factors such as the type of classroom the program will take place in, as well as the outcomes of the APEEC observation.
- **Food Service:** includes daily and nutritious meals provided to participants, as well as refreshments for parent education meetings and special events. To save on costs, it is prudent to look for ways to subsidize meals through district or community food programs.
- **Consultants/Professional Services:** includes costs related to presenters for parent education classes and interpreters.
- **Miscellaneous Items:** includes incentives for parents and costs associated with field trip fees.
- **Administrative/Indirect Expenses:** includes overhead expenses including janitorial services, space and utilities and indirect district or agency costs.

# Sustaining an SPK Program

As First 5 revenues continue to decline, F5AC has contracted with external consultants to assist school districts in making strategic decisions about SPK sustainability. School districts are provided with a “Sustainability Toolkit” that offers a set of strategies for sustainability planning and implementation. Upon completion of the sustainability training, school districts have the tools necessary to write and implement a sustainability plan, while evaluating which components of their program should be sustained.

## Indicators of a Successful and Sustainable SPK Program

Through its partnerships with school districts, F5AC has identified factors that can contribute to successful sustainable SPK programs. The indicators below are common program infrastructures that were in-place at some of the most successful SPK programs in the county. These program infrastructures can significantly influence and increase the capacity to partially or fully sustain some of the SPK program components. It is important to highlight that “indicators of success” vary across agencies due to community needs, school and community resources, and demographics of the children and parents participating in SPK programs.

**An investment in quality early care for at-risk children can yield a rate of return of 12-16%.\***

## Factors Contributing to Sustainability and Success

- There is strong support from leadership such as the school board, superintendents, principals, teachers and community partners.
- Funds are leveraged so that the SPK program, or crucial elements, can be sustained for a substantial period of time.
- The SPK program and fiscal staff/department maintain close contact and engage in frequent SPK program planning, budgeting and expense monitoring.

## Funding Sources

Funding for the SPK program can be generated through many resources within local communities. Possible funding sources include:

- School district Title 1 funds.
- Large and small foundations and service organizations.
- In-kind staffing provided by partner State Preschools or other early childhood programs.

“Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return,” Fedgazette. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis (March 2003)



# Program Evaluation

As you embark upon implementing an SPK program, it is important to develop ways to evaluate your efforts to ensure that the program is meeting the needs of the children and families you are serving.

SPK programs should devise ways to collect data

from parents and teachers to learn about satisfaction levels and perceptions of the SPK program. Results are used to make program improvements and to build upon program strengths. Evaluation results should be shared with teachers, staff, parents, and

the community, while being incorporated into service delivery approaches.

Some evaluation strategies may include:

**Parent Survey:** Generally distributed within the last week of a program in multiple languages to gain an

understanding of parents' satisfaction with the program, suggested improvements and observations about their child's readiness for school. Parent surveys can also provide information about the impact of the program on participating families.

**Non-native English speakers who attended preschool had 85 percent greater gains on measures of language development than did other non-native English speakers who did not attend preschool.\***

**Teacher Survey:** Anonymous online surveys offer a confidential safe environment for teachers to share their experiences as well suggest improvements for the program.

**Focus Groups:** Identify stakeholders that are impacted by your program and host focus

groups in order to gauge the effect your program has had on children transitioning to Kindergarten. This may include Kindergarten and preschool teachers, licensed child care providers, school district officials, and parents.



## Conclusion

There is a significant amount of research demonstrating the fact that the achievement gap begins before children start school. As states and communities work to create good learning environments for young children, we also need to ensure that young children develop and acquire the necessary competencies to thrive in Kindergarten and beyond. Just as the early years are important for determining life long approaches to learning, school readiness programs serve as the “springboard,” readying children for a smooth transition to kindergarten. By collaborating, and by integrating and linking early care and education systems and services, communities can build, strengthen and promote school readiness efforts that contribute to the overall well-being of children.

For more information about First 5 Alameda County's SPK program, contact:

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# Appendix A. Suggested Classroom Materials

## FINE MOTOR AND MANIPULATIVES

- Play dough and tools: scissors, cutters, rolling pins, spatulas, stamps
- Dressing boards: lacing, tying, snapping, zipping
- Blocks: unit blocks, soft blocks, block props
- Sorting and counting: bears, animals
- Building toys: magnet tiles, legos, Lincoln Logs, marble construction
- Puzzles: table puzzles, floor puzzles
- Beads and lacing string

## LARGE MOTOR

- Tricycles, scooters, wagons, helmets
- Balls: various sizes and textures
- Parachute
- Balance and coordination tools: cones, bean bags

## CREATIVE EXPRESSION & SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

- Paper: assorted colors, sizes, textures
- Jumbo or short crayons: assorted colors and multicultural skin colors
- Glue: sticks and white
- Scissors: safety scissors and training scissors
- Collage items: tissue paper, wiggly eyes, confetti, pom-poms, feathers
- Easel and drying rack
- Painting supplies: paint, brushes, cups
- Feelings chart poster
- Persona dolls
- Bubble wands

## DRAMATIC PLAY

- Kitchen furniture, cooking and food set (food representative of different cultures)
- Babies: representative of different cultures
- Dress up clothes
- Animals: jungle, dinosaurs, farm, water
- Playhouse

## MUSIC AND MOVEMENT

- CD player and CD's: Greg & Steve, Dr. Jean, Raffi, fitness music
- Musical instruments
- Movement props: small bean bags, scarves, streamers

## RELAXATION AREA

- Bean bag chairs
- Oversized stuffed animals

## LITERACY

- Picture books: representative of different languages and cultures
- Flannel board characters with corresponding book
- Waterproof aprons, table cloths, floor mats

## SENSORY AND SCIENCE

- Sensory table: water, sand
- Water and sand props
- Stimulation: shaving cream, Incredible Foam Dough
- Magnifying glasses, mirrors

## Appendix B. Sample Parent Workshop Topics

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### LITERACY

- Literacy and use of local and community Library Services
- The value of reading and sharing books with your child

### HEALTH AND DENTAL

- Nutrition: Basic healthy living, healthy snacks and breakfast foods
- Appropriate use of technology including limiting screen time
- The importance of physical activity and exercise.
- Vision and hearing screening and asthma management
- Sugar savvy: Encouraging families to become soda free
- Oral health in young children
- Health requirements for incoming Kindergartners, and common childhood diseases
- Safety tips for families, and tips for emergency situations

### SCHOOL READINESS

- Preparing children for their transition to Kindergarten
- Transition to Kindergarten programs
- Developmental screenings and services
- Social and emotional development and self-regulation
- Maintaining good attendance
- Parent school involvement and leadership
- Student/Family services overview
- Availability and information about before and after school programs
- Parenting skills including positive discipline
- Introduction to the PTA







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