



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS PACESETTER

STOCKTON

Category: School Readiness

Led by First 5 San Joaquin, the City of Stockton, a community of nearly 300,000 residents in northern California, has made considerable strides in advancing school readiness – not just by expanding the availability of free preschool programs, but by increasing the capacity of churches, day care providers, hospitals and other organizations and individuals to promote school readiness.

Through the Child Care Professional Growth Project, First 5 San Joaquin has invested nearly \$4.5 million in college stipends, training programs and other initiatives to help child care providers become early education professionals. With funding through the federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, First 5 San Joaquin has begun developing a tiered rating system for early care and education settings. This critical piece of school readiness infrastructure expands access to high-quality early childhood opportunities in direct and indirect ways. Directly, it provides both an incentive and a roadmap for providers in the region to improve the quality of their programs. Indirectly, it shows parents what to look for in choosing a child care setting.

For the 2011-12 fiscal year, First 5 San Joaquin awarded mini-grants of \$1,000 each to 23 faith-based groups to promote school readiness. One grant recipient, Destiny Christian Center, used the money to hold a parent workshop, “Storytelling Moms: Making Books Come Alive,” where participants learned how to read with young children. The church also launched “The Reading Well,” a reading club for families that provides parents with books and reading lists. Little Flock Baptist Church, another grant recipient, holds a three-part series of school readiness workshops, and every Sunday, brief messages from the pulpit give families tools to help children become kindergarten-ready by the age of five.

Between 2005 and 2010, First 5 San Joaquin made an average annual investment of \$4 million to \$5 million in home visitation programs and served an average of 1,340 children per year. These home visitation services used the Parents as Teachers curriculum, a strategy that supports the role of parents in promoting school readiness and healthy development of children. This relationship-based curriculum fosters learning experiences that are relevant and tailored to the individual needs of each family and child.

To help ensure that more children are born healthy, First 5 San Joaquin has worked to station nurses and community health outreach workers at resource centers in low-income neighborhoods. These health professionals connect underserved clients to prenatal care and other maternal and child health services and resources.

STRATEGIES

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