



POLICY AGENDA 2022 SUMMARY:
A Coordinated System from Cradle-to-Career in California



UNITE LA
Education Innovation Through Collaboration



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California's public servants, including the next Governor, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and State Legislators, have a significant responsibility and will have the power to uplift millions of Californians and brighten their futures.

The past few years have been marked by both incredible struggle for California's children, families, and residents; and important progress towards better policies and systems change to serve them. Notably, the \$2.7 billion investment in Universal Transitional Kindergarten; \$3 billion one-time Prop 98 investments for the expansion of Community Schools throughout California; \$1 billion investment for the Learning-Aligned Employment Program and Golden State Education and Training Program to support students and adult workers; Development of and initial implementation funding for Recovery with Equity: A Roadmap for Higher Education After the Pandemic; and legislation and investments to establish a statewide, longitudinal data system for California all demonstrate the state's commitment to a cradle-to-career policy agenda. While these successes should be celebrated, significant work remains.

We are all responsible for transforming our institutions and systems so they support all students to reach their full potential. This necessitates a cradle to career approach to ensure California's education and workforce systems are focused on racial and social justice, and are better coordinated — from cradle to career — to create a seamless path for students across the whole developmental spectrum.

A Coordinated System from Cradle to Career

California's current segmented education and workforce development systems fail to effectively meet the diverse needs of all students, their families, and their communities. A coordinated system, from cradle to career, is essential to ensuring students are able to access the full range of services available to support their overall growth, development, and ultimate success.

Cradle to Career Systems Building Policy Recommendations

Early care and education, PreK-12, higher education, and workforce development systems must be better coordinated and aligned to uplift the individual beneficiaries of their work more effectively. The following are recommendations for California's leaders to implement to build a strong cradle to career system:

1. Support efforts that expand access to affordable high quality, ECE experiences and childcare for infants, toddlers and preschoolers that build the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for school readiness.
2. Fully implement Governor Newsom's Paid Family Leave (PFL) Task Force recommendations and continue and strengthen state and federal investments to the PFL program, including increased wage replacement and inclusion of all public sector employees.
3. Fund efforts that ensure California's youth are globally competitive, such as policies and investments supporting Dual Language Learner (DLL) and English learner (EL) programs.
4. Fund seamless Linked Learning / Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways and dual enrollment between PreK-12 and community colleges.
5. Expand high school students' graduation options through creative partnerships with Community Colleges and with alternative schools, providing students with other ways to earn a high school diploma.
6. Fund LEAs to collaborate with postsecondary student success teams to incorporate career advising and development strategies before students graduate from high school and align secondary and postsecondary advising systems.
7. Provide further funding and support for regional efforts to convene PreK-12 districts, IHEs, and employers to develop shared agendas for postsecondary student success; expand these efforts to include institutions and partners from birth to five systems.
8. Implement structures for statewide attainment of certificates, credentials, credit for prior learning, and degrees that support the needs of state and regional economies and individuals in the workforce.
9. Fund increased facilities infrastructure cradle to career.
10. Advocate for reform and to modernize the federal immigration system to provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, including but not limited to essential workers, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) beneficiaries.
11. Continue to develop and implement policies that dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline.



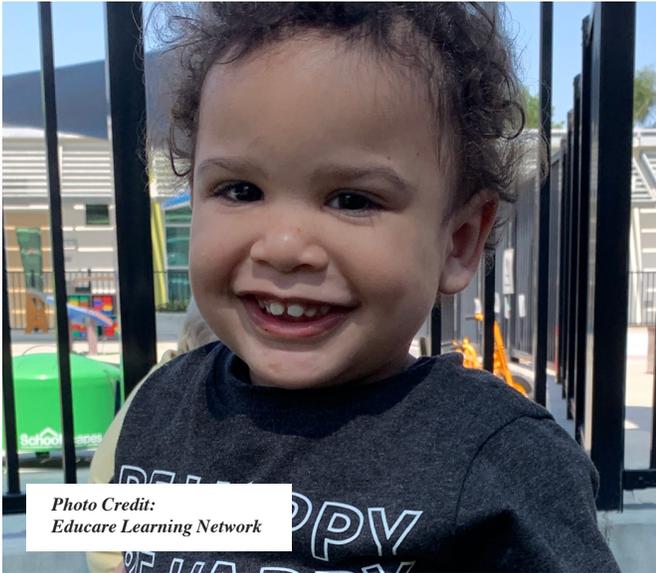


Photo Credit:
Educare Learning Network

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Young children thrive when they experience supportive and nurturing interactions with the adults in their lives.

Recommendation 1: Increase access to early education opportunities that meet families' needs, especially for infants and toddlers.

Recommendation 2: Increase compensation for ECE professionals.

Recommendation 3: Ensure authentic parent choice and a strong start for California's youngest learners by supporting all programs to meet high-standards.



Photo Credit:
Educare Learning Network

PREK-12

The PreK-12 system — the students, families, educators, and education professionals — has suffered under enormous strain and stress through the COVID-19 pandemic. As policymakers address the pandemic and its aftermath, there is an opportunity to implement evidence-based, equity-focused approaches to education and to rebuild systems to strengthen learning opportunities for all students.

Recommendation 1: Ensure that students' PreK-12 learning experiences build upon and amplify strong early learning foundations.

Recommendation 2: Invest in educators.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen local planning, decision-making and implementation capacity to meet the needs of California's diverse students and communities.

Recommendation 4: Foster student engagement and motivation by connecting their learning to real-world applications and authentic experiences.



HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is the primary pathway to many high-wage careers, providing for upward socioeconomic mobility through career advancement and higher earnings. Higher education also plays a pivotal role in the development of the problem solvers, innovators, and inventors needed to address 21st century problems and maintain global competitiveness.¹

Recommendation 1: Fully implement California's vision for its public higher education systems and establish realistic targets towards meeting the state's proposed credential and degree attainment goal.

Recommendation 2: Close attainment gaps and improve outcomes for underserved, underrepresented, and non-traditional student populations.

Recommendation 3: Make higher education accessible and affordable.

Recommendation 4: Improve higher education accountability and transparency through better alignment and data.

¹ Baum, S., Ma, J., & Payea, K. (2013). Education Pays, 2013: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society. Trends in Higher Education Series. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://research.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/education-pays-2013-full-report.pdf>



WORKFORCE

Implementing a coordinated, equitable cradle to career system will result in a more competitive, qualified, and well compensated workforce in California. It will create a workforce capable of driving innovation and economic development, and will begin to address the racial and social justice disparities seen in current workforce outcomes.

Recommendation 1: Take an innovative workforce-focused, skills-based approach to poverty reduction.

Recommendation 2: Invest in regional workforce partnerships.

Recommendation 3: Develop workforce strategies for California's immigrant workforce.

Recommendation 4: Remove barriers to employment by advocating for expungement, support for harm reduction programs and alternatives to incarceration.

California's elected leaders have the power and the responsibility to uplift the future of California's children and economy. Advancing equity will be most successful if a deliberate cradle to career focus is applied, with policies, programs, and funding strongly coordinated and aligned in a way that improves the quality of life for all Californians, including our youngest community members. Together, with strategic investments, bold leadership, and actively engaged communities, the Golden State will be poised for a bright, equitable, and successful future.

For the complete UNITE-LA Cradle-to-Career Policy Agenda, see <http://unitela.com/2022-policy-agenda>



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