

San Mateo County Universal Preschool Feasibility Study *Phase V: Three Scenarios -- Steps to Getting Started*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The feasibility study, commissioned by the Center for Health Improvement on behalf of the San Mateo Children and Families First Commission and funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, was carried out in five phases by Health and Human Services Consultants of Southern California. The phases consisted of the following:

- ▶ Phase I. Universal Preschool: A Review of the Literature
- ▶ Phase II. Key Informant Study
- ▶ Phase III. Environmental Scan
- ▶ Phase IV. Funding Universal Preschool
- ▶ Phase V. Three Scenarios – Steps to Getting Started

This executive summary reports on the final phase, where the focus has been placed on choices for implementation which arise from the findings of the first four parts of the study. Three scenarios are presented for deliberation and review, each building on what is already in place but using different strategies. The scenarios have been costed out for full implementation; a 10% annual expansion goal is suggested for implementing the new initiative, which has been costed out in Scenarios A and B.

A set of operating assumptions is articulated at the outset, for use in setting expectations for program development and determining which of the options would achieve the greatest success. Following the construction of the scenarios a grid was developed, based on defining program elements derived from the first phase national literature review of Universal Preschool initiatives. Finally, next steps to be taken summarize activities towards implementation of a plan for the county. The three scenarios were presented at a stakeholder meeting held on September 19th, 2002, followed by discussion of how these options could be used in the ensuing process of creating a plan for San Mateo.

A Set of Operating Assumptions

- ▶ The program would include four-year-olds only in the initial phase.

- ▶ The Universal Preschool program would be voluntary.
- ▶ The parents would be offered choice.
- ▶ Existing early care and education facilities would be used to the extent possible.
- ▶ A phased-in approach would be used.
- ▶ Highest priority would be given to four-year-olds who have not had prior experience in a formal, curriculum-based program (estimated to be 50% of all children entering kindergarten).
- ▶ Publicly funded resources would be expanded by increasing the number and size of programs which serve four-year-olds, pooling funding streams where possible and enrolling part and full-paying preschoolers in all programs where it is possible.
- ▶ Universal Preschool issues would be included in all policy and planning forums which focus on School Readiness.
- ▶ All elementary schools, in districts with populations large enough to support the enrollment, would be urged to offer at least one state-funded or school-linked preschool program.
- ▶ All possible private funding sources (grants, contracts, other) would be explored to expand existing services, paying special attention to underserved populations and communities, and the need for full-time care for working parents.
- ▶ Funded programs would be supported in the expansion of services to offer part and full-time spaces wherever possible, to meet the needs of working parents.
- ▶ “Wrap-around” child care services operated by community child care providers would be promoted, and linked with part-day preschool programs.
- ▶ Movement towards achieving the clearly articulated (desired) goal of serving all four-year-olds could be reached by continually expanding and making connections between the parts of the existing system, directed at improving quality and meeting family needs.
- ▶ Collaborative planning for early care and education services at the community level would be supported.
- ▶ All key stakeholders would be engaged in the planning and governance of the county-wide plan.
- ▶ All funded programs would agree to participate fully in ongoing trainings which will promote school readiness through their curriculum and environment, to share resources such

as mental health/special needs consultation, curriculum materials, parent education resources etc., and to collaborate in expanding services.

Three Scenarios

The three scenarios offered for deliberation are the following:

① *Community-Based Wrap-Around Program Expansion*

In this scenario, the Peninsula Partnership for Children, Youth and Families would be the lead agency, in its relationship to the nine Community Collaboratives which include 70% of San Mateo County's entering kindergarten children, and also include all major cities. Planning for expansion of existing early care and education centers and family child care homes for four-year-olds would be assumed by the collaboratives in partnership with the lead agency. A Request for Proposals would offer the collaboratives the opportunity to apply for funds to expand existing programs, create new programs, subsidize low-income families and children with disabilities, and develop partnerships for wrap-around services needed for working families. The Peninsula Partnership Council would serve as the governance body, with the addition of the business sector. The County Office of Education could be linked in a partnership to bring needed resources and technical assistance for training and program development.

② *State-Funded Preschools, Head Start and School-Linked Programs as Core*

Twenty school districts offer some type of preschool program on 56 school campuses; these programs, in combination with the existing Head Starts would be considered the core of the Universal Preschool initiative for San Mateo County. In some instances these programs are operated by the schools themselves, and in other instances they are run by community providers on school sites. Licensed family homes and other centers wishing to be included would be added under conditions relating to adoption of existing standards for all state-subsidized programs. The County Office of Education would be the lead agency, and an appointed body representing all stakeholders would function as the governance body.

③ *Expanded Voucher Payment System*

For this last scenario, an expansion of access to child care subsidies is suggested for families whose income falls outside of the state guidelines and caps for subsidy eligibility, but who are in need of such assistance. It is suggested that 100% of State Median Income (SMI) be used as the upper limit (currently capped at 75%) for this new voucher expansion. The lead agency for this voucher system could be contracted out to an agency, or agencies, already providing vouchers for child care services, such as an Alternative Payment program. Providers eligible to offer services would include only licensed centers and family child care homes. They would be required to participate in trainings to promote school readiness activities and movement towards adoption of quality-standards set by the state for all subsidized programs. The governance body would be appointed, to include all key stakeholders.

The rationale for each of the three scenarios is discussed in the full body of the text in terms of how well each satisfies the goals of the Universal Preschool initiative.

Steps to Getting Started

Nine steps to getting started have been developed to assist in deliberations of “what next,” and “how do we get there.”

1. Determine funding available, and conditions for allocation.
2. Continue work of the “Design Group” towards completion of a marketable plan.
3. Set a target date for implementation (may use a phase-in approach).
4. Select a lead agency and establish governance structure.
5. Begin a community awareness and information campaign.
6. Create and disseminate a “Request for Proposals,” and a selection system.
7. Inform the community of new opportunities and programs.
8. Track the outcomes of efforts to promote school readiness.
9. Consider contracting or collaborating with research entities to conduct a long-range outcome study.

Finally, conclusions are stated, evaluating the usefulness of undertaking the feasibility study from a variety of perspectives, and placing the movement for Universal Preschool in a societal context.

INTRODUCTION

In the last phase of the feasibility study a number of options were examined for the creation of a San Mateo Universal Preschool plan. Part of this review involved meeting with California Department of Education (CDE) personnel: Tom Cole who was the previously assigned “point” person for Superintendent Delaine Easton’s Universal Preschool plan, and Terry Miller, who is the Administrator for the Funding, Allocation and Administrative Services Unit of the Child Development Division. In addition, a phone discussion was held with Dan Cross, CDE State Preschool staff liaison for San Mateo County, on policies and potential expansions of the state subsidized programs. Information was sought and given on the possibilities and limitations of existing state and federal funding streams for child care services. Out of these deliberations with state personnel, combined with the information already collected for the phases of the feasibility study, and discussions with several San Mateo key stakeholders, a number of operating assumptions evolved for the selection of viable options, and are offered below.

I. TERMS AND OPERATING ASSUMPTIONS

It is important that all readers have an understanding of the terms and operating assumptions that pertain to the implementation of a Universal Preschool program for San Mateo County.

Definition of Terms

The word “**preschool**” is generally applied to the three to five year old age group, up to the time of entry into kindergarten. We are using this meaning in the report, although there is current discussion taking place about focusing the Universal Preschool initiative on four-year-olds, at least at the outset. No firm decision has been reached at this time. Other terms which need to be clarified at the outset are the following:

State Preschool. State preschool’s are usually a part-day, comprehensive developmental program for three to five-year old children from low-income families, funded by the State of California, Department of Education. The program emphasizes parent education and encourages parent involvement. In addition to basic preschool education activities, components include health, nutrition, social services, and staff development.

General Child Care (GCC). This term is used to describe programs that utilize centers and networks of family child care homes, operated by either a public or private agency, to provide child care and development services from infancy through age fourteen for state-funded-programs, and through thirteen for federal programs.

Head Start. These programs use center and in-home services operated by grantees or their delegate agencies that contract directly with the federal Administration for Children and Families to provide educational, health, medical, dental, nutritional and mental health services to infants, toddlers, and preschool- age children.

Family Child Care Homes (FCCH). Care is provided for children in a family setting. Small homes are licensed to care for up to eight children; large FCCH's are licensed to serve as many as 14 children.

Resource and Referral (R & R). R & R programs provide information to all parents and the community about the availability of child care, assist providers in a number of ways including training, and coordinate community resources.

Full-day. Optimally, full-day is considered to be eight to twelve hours.

Part-day. Four hours or less.

School-day. Five to seven hours.

Full-year. 249 days

School-year. State and district defined.

Note: Most part-day programs operate only during the school calendar year.

Economically disadvantaged/at-risk: Defined by each state in relation to program eligibility and can include:

- ▶ those eligible for TANF (CalWORKs), Medicaid (Medi-Cal), food stamps, free school lunch, unemployment compensation, disability compensation (SSI), WIC, other
- ▶ at or below state median income, or some percentage of state median income e.g. 75%
- ▶ at or below federal poverty index, adjusted by size of family.

Operating Assumptions

- ▶ **The program would include four-year-olds only in the initial phase.** Due to the challenges of funding in a time of budgetary constraints, the implementation plan for Universal Preschool recommended at this time includes four-year-olds only. (A four-year-old is a child whose fourth birthday is on or before December 12th in the fiscal year in which he or she would be enrolled in preschool.) Three-year-olds could be included in subsequent years using the same phase-in strategy being proposed for four-year-olds.
- ▶ **The Universal Preschool program would be voluntary.** Parents can decide whether their four-year-old would participate or not. For the purposes of the implementation plan and cost analysis, and based on information available on fully implemented programs, it was estimated that 75% of the parents would enroll their four-year-olds.

- ▶ **The parents would be offered choice.** To offer choice to parents, licensed family child care providers and centers, in addition to state-contracted CDD child care, state preschool and Head Start programs, are included in all of the proposed scenarios.
- ▶ **Existing early care and education facilities would be used to the extent possible.** In these times of budgetary constraints and high cost of real estate, it is prudent to use existing early care and education facilities where possible. Existing facilities would provide a sense of continuity and stability. This is the only reasonable approach in terms of financial and other resources needed to create a system which will ultimately serve all four-year-olds in the county whose parents wish to enroll them.
- ▶ **A phased-in approach would be used.** We have proposed a multi-year implementation plan. This approach allows for adjustments as the Universal Preschool program is implemented, impacting a larger number of children and families in any given year. The funding requirements are also in smaller increments, allowing more time to acquire additional dollars. Ten percent of total program costs has been included for expansion in the costs of implementation tables for each scenario.
- ▶ **Highest priority should be given to four-year-olds who have not had prior experience in a formal, curriculum-based program (estimated to be 50% of all children entering kindergarten).** This population of children include those who come from low-income families, and those who and those who speak a primary language other than English.
- ▶ **Publicly funded resources would be expanded by increasing the number and size of programs which serve four-year-olds, pooling funding streams where possible and enrolling part and full-paying preschoolers in all programs.** State guidelines permit subsidized and non-subsidized slots in all state contracts. Parent fees may be added to most state subsidized programs which would allow for a mix of fully subsidized, partly-subsidized from state funds, full and part paying non-subsidized spaces from private funds. Part-paying, based on a standardized sliding-scale fee structure, could be augmented by private funding sources such as the San Mateo Children and Families First Commission funds.
- ▶ **Universal Preschool issues would be included in all policy and planning forums which focus on School Readiness.** As discussed in the Phase I Literature Review of this study, Universal Preschool and School Readiness are overlapping concepts and should be considered as parts of all efforts to prepare children for success in school.

- ▶ **All elementary schools, in districts with populations large enough to support the enrollment, would be urged to offer at least one state-funded or school-linked preschool program.** Programs can either be administered directly by the school district, can be offered space on school sites, or can be contracted out to the provider community. Again, subsidized and unsubsidized spaces could be offered in all programs, similar to the new initiative created this year in Union City.
- ▶ **All possible private funding sources (grants, contracts, other) would be explored to expand existing services, paying special attention to underserved populations and communities, and the need for full-time care for working parents.** Currently, the San Mateo Children and Families First Commission has committed one million dollars a year for the next ten years to address improvement and expansion needs for early care and education. Other funds have been committed through the Child Care Action Campaign. Creative and innovative approaches have been used in some states. Examples are noted in the Phase IV Funding Universal Preschool report, one of which is the funding campaign in Seattle which has initiated action to add a 10 cent tax on each cup of espresso coffee sold in the city, estimated to net several million dollars for child care services. Florida places a small tax (1%) on large business owners that employ low-wage workers. The funds are used to augment subsidies for child care. The San Mateo County CFFC is now also committing \$300,000 a year to the county's Child Care Facility Expansion Fund.
- ▶ **Funded programs would be supported in the expansion of services to offer part and full-time spaces wherever possible, to meet the needs of working parents.** Over 60% of parents who call the Child Care Coordinating Council's referral line are requesting full-time care; 66% of families with children are in the workplace. At the same time, few subsidized preschool programs are currently offering full-time care. Low-income families are especially in need of full-time care, but turn to non-regulated care in order to meet that need.
- ▶ **"Wrap-around" child care services operated by community child care providers would be promoted, and linked with part-day preschool programs.** Quality preschool programs would be more functionally accessible to low-income and other working families if they were extended across the full work day (typically 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.), and the full work year (249 days).

- ▶ **Movement towards achieving the clearly articulated (desired) goal of serving all four-year-olds could be reached by continually expanding and making connections between the parts of the existing system, directed at improving quality and meeting family needs.** The increasing collaborations between the State Preschools and Head Start provide models of how programs can create new partnerships. Examples of these collaborations in San Mateo can be reviewed, and have also been documented in other counties in the California Department of Education publication “Collaborative Partners,” 1999. Examples of collaboration with school districts in other regions were also included in the literature review prepared for this study.
- ▶ **Collaborative planning for early care and education services at the community level would be supported.** The activities of the nine community collaboratives, described in the “Community Voices” project (2000) of the Peninsula Partnership Foundation represent the desirable goal of shaping services to meet local community needs.
- ▶ **All stakeholders would be engaged in the governance and management of the county-wide plan.** Some forums already exist in the county which would satisfy this principle, with the addition of missing partners such as the business sector. Permit each stakeholder group to carry one vote in deliberations that require decisions and cannot be reached by consensus.
- ▶ **All funded programs would agree to participate fully in ongoing trainings which will promote school readiness through their curriculum and environment, to share resources such as mental health/special needs consultation, curriculum materials, parent education resources etc., and to collaborate in expanding services.** The preschool learning guidelines of the California Department of Education, clearly articulated in the publication “Prekindergarten Learning and Development Guidelines,” 2000, should be adopted as the practice standard for curriculum development. Ultimately, performance standards to be applied to all funded programs would be those currently in place for state-subsidized programs. Programs receiving funds would be given a reasonable amount of time to meet standards, and could be provided with technical assistance and incentive awards.

II. ESTIMATED PROGRAM COSTS

In Table 1, the costs for a center-based program were calculated for a full-day and a half-day program covering 249 days a year. The cost per full-day child is estimated at \$50 which is well above what most programs are currently charging. This is approximately \$2 per day higher than the Head Start reimbursement rates, and hopefully in the future can be further increased to ensure a quality Universal Preschool program. The half-day cost per child is approximately \$27 and is based on two half-day programs being conducted. Due to cost efficiencies, we do not anticipate any participant would offer a single half-day program only; providing some level of full-day programs may be a requirement of the RFP.

Table 1.
Program Costs

Classroom of 24; 249 days/year	CENTER MODEL	
	Full Day	Half Day*
Personnel Costs:		
Teacher/Director (@ \$24/hour)	\$47,808	\$47,808
Teacher (@ \$18/hour)	\$35,856	\$35,856
Teacher Aides (2.5 @ \$12/hour)	\$59,760	\$59,760
Personnel costs – subtotal	\$143,424	\$143,424
Fringe Benefits (25% of salaries)	\$35,856	\$35,856
Substitutes	\$15,360	\$15,360
Personnel costs – Total	\$194,640	\$194,640
Non-Personnel Costs:		
Rent (1800 sq. ft. x \$2.00/sq. ft.)	\$43,200	\$43,200
Telephone (\$50/month)	\$600	\$600
Utilities (\$250/month)	\$3,000	\$3,000
Supplies	\$2,400	\$4,800
Food	\$17,988	\$30,119
Non-personnel costs - Total	\$67,188	\$81,719
Administrative Costs (15%)	\$39,274	\$41,454
COST PER CLASSROOM	\$301,102	\$317,813
COST PER CHILD	\$12,546	6,621
COST PER CHILD per day	\$50.39	\$26.59
Head Start Reimbursement Rates	\$48.46	\$24.20
State Preschool Reimbursement Rates	\$27.59	\$17.61

*NOTE: Half-day figures are based on two (2) half-day programs being conducted.

Explanation of Costs

Personnel Costs

- ▶ All salaries are based on the compensation rates for San Mateo County provided by Career Ladders¹ and “A Profile of the San Mateo County Child Care Workforce.”²
- ▶ Fringe benefits were calculated at 25% of salaries.

Non-Personnel Costs

- ▶ Rent is based on 50 square feet per child plus 600 square feet for office and kitchen space. The square footage cost is the mid-range of square footage charges in San Mateo County.³ The cost per child per day can be significantly reduced if space is available at no charge or a significantly reduced rate, as is the case with some preschools on school campuses. At the going rate of \$2.00 per square foot, this line item represents 14% of the \$50 per-child-per-day cost.
- ▶ Telephone and utilities charges are rough estimates. Again, if the preschool is occupying space at no charge and/or the telephone and utilities are included at no charge or a significantly reduced rate, this line item may be null. On the other hand, if the preschool is fully responsible for the utilities charges, it is hard to predict the actual costs due to the energy situation in California.
- ▶ Two hundred dollars (\$200) per classroom per month has been allotted for supplies.
- ▶ Food cost is based on \$4.30 per day per full-day child (breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack) and \$3.60 per day per half-day child (breakfast and lunch). A 30% reduction was taken to reflect food program reimbursements.

Costs of Administration

The cost of administration applied to each program is 15% of personnel and non-personnel costs – the maximum allowed by State of California funding. This allocation contributes toward the costs of additional staffing and/or the cost to contract services (e.g., janitorial services), commercial liability and general accident insurance, licensing fee, etc.

Family Child Care Home Cost

A comparison was conducted between the center-based program cost of \$50 per child per day (full-day) against the fees charged by licensed family child care homes. As the table below indicates, the most costly licensed family child care provider charges approximately \$40 per child per day for full-time care, indicating that the \$50 per-child-per-day reimbursement rate for Universal Preschool would be more than acceptable to San Mateo County’s family child care providers. The cost differential also suggest using two separate cost scales: One for centers and one for family homes.

Table 2.
Licensed Family Child Care Home Rates⁴
Preschooler (full-time)

Rates	Per Month	Per Day
Highest	\$866	\$39.97
Lowest	\$455	\$21.00

III. THREE POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

The three scenarios which follow were constructed from the findings of an extensive review of the national literature in Phase I of the feasibility study, the views and opinions of 32 San Mateo County key informants in Phase II, the Environmental Scan highlights of resources and challenges in Phase III, and the review of all major funding sources currently in place to support early care and education services documented in Phase IV. In addition, several San Mateo documents and studies of community and child care needs were employed during the construction of the scenarios. As there are always different choices which can be selected in creating a new initiative, we chose to present three versions which could stand alone or could be combined, in offering a beginning framework towards the desired goal of creating a Universal Preschool plan..

These scenarios, or directions to be taken, were chosen for their potential applicability and relevance to the San Mateo County environment. They are intended to be reworked into a model which will meet the interests of all key stakeholders, and no doubt will emerge looking quite different from the those presented here. It is likely that some or all of the elements we have suggested will be addressed in the process of creating a final plan for Universal Preschool.

The successful implementation strategies employed by seven states (Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, South Carolina and Texas) identified in the Literature Review revealed four basic models for Universal Preschool initiatives:

- ▶ State contracts with school districts which sub-contract with Head Start and child care centers.
- ▶ State contracts with school districts, Head Start, and private providers.
- ▶ State contracts with school districts; districts may sub-contract with Head Start or programs funded by the Child Care and Development Fund (previously called the Child Care and Development Block Grant).
- ▶ State contracts with community lead agencies that may be a public school, Head Start or licensed child care center; lead agencies in turn sub-contract for services.

As reported in the Key Informant Study, the San Mateo County Office of Education was the most frequent choice in response to the question of who shall serve as the administrative auspice. In addition, the 32 respondents most often recommended the following organizations for leadership in a Universal Preschool initiative for their county:

- ▶ San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE)
- ▶ Child Care Coordinating Council
- ▶ Peninsula Partnership Council
- ▶ School Districts/Boards
- ▶ Children and Families First Commission (CFFC)

These organizations would be represented in all of the scenarios offered.

Funding Assumptions for Three Scenarios

- ▶ *(For Scenarios A and B only)* Funds requested by eligible participants can be used to expand facilities; subsidize families who fall outside of eligibility guidelines for state and federally funded programs and children with developmental disabilities (have an Individual Educational Program (IEP)); or create: 1) wrap-around services 2) developmentally appropriate program options for four-year-olds, or 3) new classrooms.
- ▶ *(For Scenario C only)* Funds can be used only for vouchers to subsidize enrollment in participating licensed family child care homes and centers.
- ▶ Fifty percent of children will be enrolled in half-day programs, and fifty percent in full day programs.
- ▶ Seventy-five percent of all four-year-olds will participate.
- ▶ Priority for enrollment will be given to children who have had no prior experience in a formal, curriculum-based preschool (estimated to be 50% of all children entering kindergarten). These children will include low-income families and families who speak a

primary language other than English due to the substantial overlap between these populations.⁵

- ▶ The scenarios do not give consideration to the fact that some parents will choose to enroll their children for part-year programs (there are no estimates available). It is assumed that spaces vacated in this way will be filled by parents needing full-time care. Another unknown factor is the total contribution from parent fees. It has been estimated, by prior survey, that eight percent of costs in state-subsidized programs are made up from parent fees. Scenarios A and B are envisioned as a mix of family income types, therefore estimates would only emerge from experience.

The following three scenarios have been created to offer alternative directions for the development of a Universal Preschool plan in San Mateo County. The scenarios are followed by estimated costs for a **fully implemented** Universal Preschool program, as well as the costs for a **phased-in implementation** at 10% per year. Those children eligible for subsidies would be served by the Universal Preschool program, but their costs are not included in the calculations as they are covered through existing child care subsidies. The scenarios are not to be taken as recommendations of the consultant group, but rather as three different ways the stakeholders can proceed in reaching their goal.

The reader is cautioned that the conditions set for the funding of these three scenarios can be altered to fit the final design of San Mateo County's Universal Preschool program. These projections are offered as examples of how costs can be estimated.

Scenario A: Community-Based Wrap-Around Program Expansion

In this first scenario, the nine Community Collaboratives, either supported by or linked with the Peninsula Partnership for Children, Youth and Families, would constitute the core of the county's Universal Preschool program. The responsibility for planning strategies to meet the goals of the Universal Preschool program would be given to the Peninsula Partnership Council in collaboration with the administrative and governing bodies of the collaboratives themselves, with

significant technical assistance from a Universal Preschool Program office which would be created to administer the program and to assist collaboratives in carrying out their plans. Collaboratives could apply to the Peninsula Community Foundation, which would act as the fiscal agent, for grants to expand existing programs for four-year-olds in each of the communities, to create partnerships which would meet families' needs for full-time care, to subsidize children who fall outside of state guidelines and children with developmental disabilities, and to initiate other parent and child enrichment activities to help prepare preschoolers for school (such as those documented in the "Community Voices" publication, 2000).

Programs funded by the collaborative could include elementary schools; state preschools; Head Start; state-funded programs; licensed centers; family homes willing to create a developmentally appropriate and stimulating learning environment for four-year-olds which meets criteria set by the governance body; the Summer Transitional Readiness Program and other appropriate options which can be created. Technical assistance could be offered to programs interested in obtaining state funding for families who are being subsidized in other ways.

Wrap-around child care services can be developed with licensed community providers, using a variety of routes such as school district teaching staff "loaned" to centers for three hours a day (see the example cited in the Phase I report from La Crosse, Wisconsin), or actually employed in the center and paid with school district funds. These initiatives would not only expand options for families, but would promote desirable linkages between the elementary schools and the early care and education field.

The Peninsula Partnership Council could serve as the governance body, with some additions. (The business sector is noticeably absent from existing collaborative planning groups.) The Universal Preschool office could be contracted out in a partnership with the County Office of Education which would be able to provide some of the technical assistance needed. Expertise and help with fiscal planning, staff training, curriculum development, local district planning, special education would be included in this technical assistance.

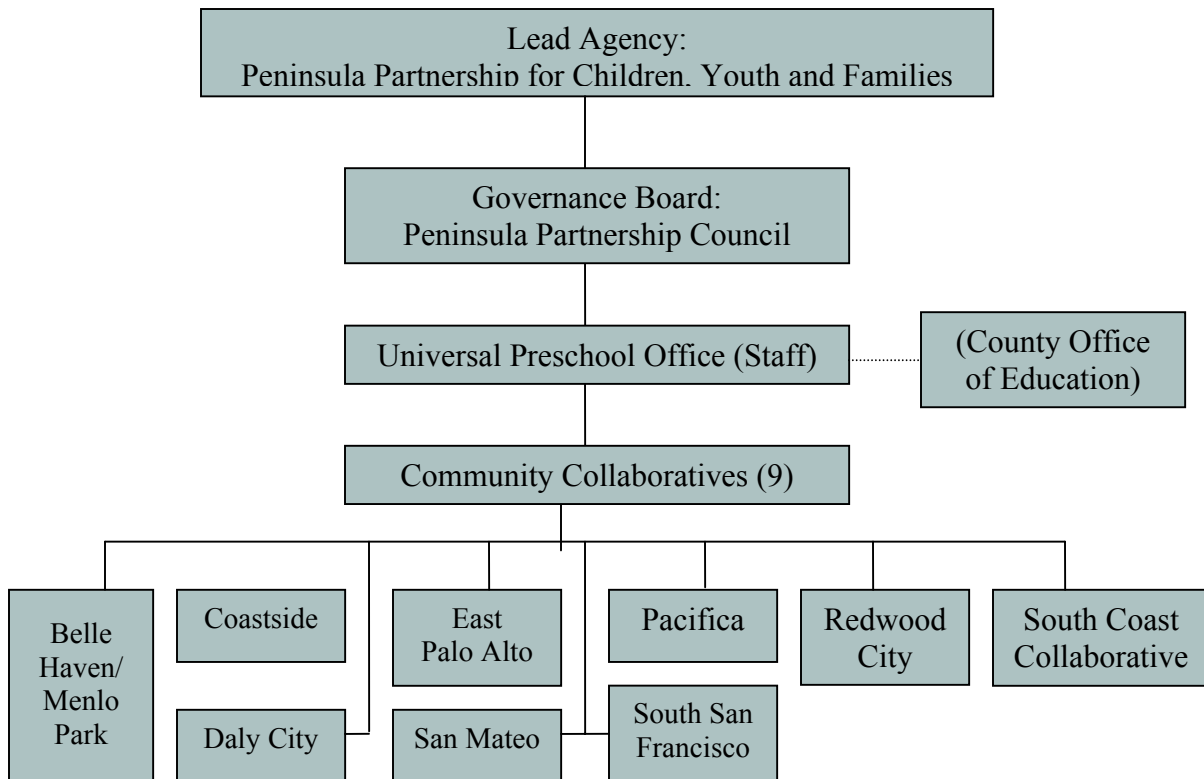
Rationale

- ▶ The greatest strength of this scenario is its ability to address the school readiness needs of the different communities in the county which have already been acknowledged and institutionalized in the funded and linked community collaboratives and which currently include 70% of all entering kindergarten children in the county, and all low income areas..
- ▶ The principle of “parental choice’ would be satisfied, while at the same time community-based decision-making would be supported.
- ▶ This scenario would enhance community capacity-building, and maximum leverage could be obtained at the local level by combining existing resources.
- ▶ The business community would be more likely to support local child care needs through initiatives such as “adopt-a-center,” and raise funds through local fraternal organizations.

Organizational Chart

The following figure depicts the potential organizational structure of Scenario A:

Figure 1.
Scenario A: Proposed Organization Chart



Estimated Implementation Costs

Table 3.
Cost of a Fully Implemented Universal Preschool Initiative – Scenario A

(Based on 249 days per year)	No. four year olds	Cost of Universal Preschool Initiative		
		Full Day	Half Day	Total
		\$50/day	\$27/day	(Full + Half)
SCENARIO A: Nine collaborative areas; all four-year-olds				
Belle Haven/Menlo Park	454			
Coastside (Half Moon Bay/Mid-Coast)	438			
Daly City	1,279			
East Palo Alto	532			
Pacifica	575			
Redwood City	1,381			
San Mateo	1,008			
South San Francisco	761			
South Coast (La Honda, Loma Mar, Pescadero and San Gregorio)	20			
Subtotal	6,448			
Less: Children already participating in preschool (50%) ⁶	3,224			
Net Four-Year-Olds to Participate	3,224			
75% = Estimated Actual Participation/Funds Needed	2,418	\$15,052,050	\$8,128,107	\$23,180,157
Funding Required for Full Implementation				\$23,180,157
1st Year Funding (10%)	242	\$1,506,450	\$813,483	\$2,319,933

SOURCE: Child Care Needs Assessment, 1999-2000, San Mateo County except as noted.

In Scenario A, all the four-year-olds in each of the nine collaborative areas supported by the Peninsula Partnership for Children, Youth and Families were identified using the San Mateo County Child Care Needs Assessment. It was concluded, as a result of the 2001 Peninsula Partnership School Readiness Pilot Initiative, that one-half of the four-year-olds entering kindergarten did not have prior experience in a formal, curriculum-based preschool. It was estimated that 75% of their parents would elect to actually have their children enroll in the

Universal Preschool program. Of the children actually participating (2,418), it was assumed one-half would be full-time and one-half would be part-time, and with the daily rate of \$50.00 for full-time and \$27 for part-time, would result in the full-day portion costing \$15,052,050 and the half-day portion costing \$8,128,107 for a total implementation funding of \$23,180,157. The phase-in approach of 10% for each year results in a full-day portion cost of \$1,506,450; the half-day portion cost would be \$813,483. The total required funding for a first year phase-in of 10% would be g \$2,319,933.

Funding Strategy

Private funds (CFFC and other sources) can be used to support the activities of the collaboratives, made available through a Request for Proposals which would require a plan for each region. Activities to be supported were noted above, and are again stated:

- ▶ Expanding programs from part to full-time.
- ▶ Creating wrap-around partnerships.
- ▶ Leveraging funds for expanding existing sites or preparing new sites.
- ▶ Subsidizing families who earn above the state guidelines but well below the self-sufficiency level (using a standardized sliding-scale fee structure), and children with school-assessed developmental disabilities.
- ▶ Including non-subsidized families in state-funded programs.
- ▶ Experimenting with different ways of increasing access and improving quality for four-year-olds.
- ▶ Involving the local business community in innovative approaches.
- ▶ Creating a local level “matching funds” initiative to extend available funds.

All programs receiving funds would receive a reasonable amount of time to meet expected standards (see Operating Assumptions), and could be provided with technical assistance and incentive awards.

Strengths

- ▶ The substantial investment already undertaken to support community-based planning and capacity-building would be advanced by this approach.

- ▶ Key partners such as school districts are already mandated to participate in local collaborative planning bodies.
- ▶ Early care and education providers are represented as collaborative partners and most collaboratives have designated child care as a priority issue
- ▶ A "cohort" factor exists in this scenario which would allow for tracking of results by expansion and improvements to the system.

Weaknesses

- ▶ The collaboratives vary in their sophistication and effectiveness; some would need a substantial amount of staff assistance in formulating and carrying out planned activities.
- ▶ Not all parts of the county are included in the collaboratives, which reach approximately 70% of the county's population and literally all of its low-income residents.. However, major cities are covered.

Scenario B: State Funded Preschools, Head Start and School-Linked Programs as Core

Twenty school districts offer some type of preschool program on 56 school campuses; these would be considered the core infrastructure of the Universal Preschool program for San Mateo County. In some instances these programs are run by the school district itself, and in other instances they are operated by community providers on school sites. Licensed centers and family home providers wishing to serve four-year-olds, both part and full time, and willing to create a developmentally appropriate and stimulating learning environment for four-year-olds, which meet criteria set by the governance body, can be added through sub-contracts. The Summer Transitional Kindergarten Readiness program, "Kickoff to Kindergarten," funded jointly by the Peninsula Partnership for Children, Youth and Families and the San Mateo Children and Families First Commission, would be included as a part-time, part-year option. This is the inclusionary model that should be promoted for four-year-old preschool programs.

In this second suggested scenario, the County Office of Education would serve as the lead agency in its role as coordinator for eleven community preschool programs, and through its

relationship to all school districts in the county. The governance body would be appointed to represent all key stakeholders in the county, including representation from the business sector.

Wrap-around child care services can be developed in the same way as described in Scenario A. Collaboration with existing community programs will expand the resources available in this model and strengthen the linkages between school districts and community early care and education programs.

These core programs should be open to children who qualify for subsidies under state guidelines for all programs, as well as to children who fall outside of state guidelines. A mix of children from different family income levels would be highly desirable, would open these quality programs up to all families, and should be promoted. This policy was discussed with California Department of Education representatives, and is absolutely possible. The greatest barrier appears to be the need to develop a cost allocation plan, which could be provided through technical assistance contracted by the Universal Preschool office.

All programs receiving funds would be given a reasonable amount of time to meet expected standards (see opening section on Operating Assumptions), and could be provided with technical assistance and incentive awards.

Rationale

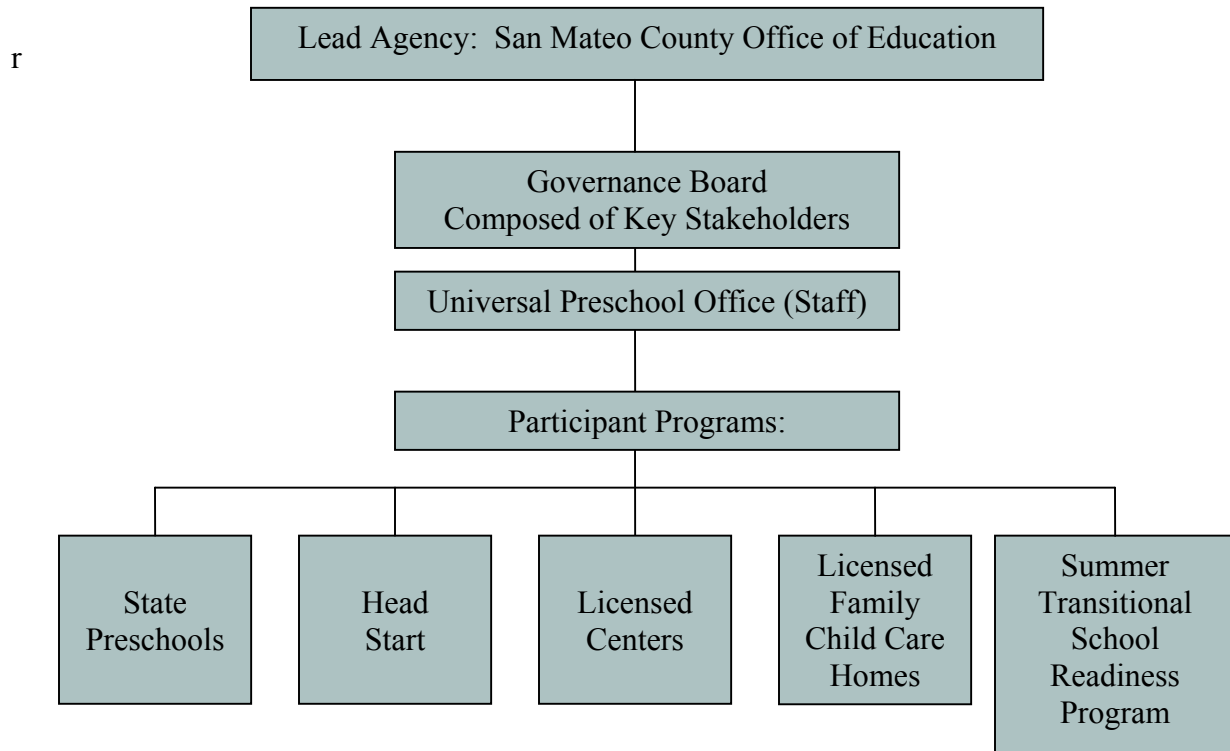
- ▶ The California Department of Education’s intent, as described in its seminal publication, “Ready to Learn: Quality Preschools for California in the 21st Century,” 1998, was to achieve universal access to quality preschool in the state through gradual expansion of the state-funded programs for low-income families.
- ▶ This intent is similar to almost all programs we have reviewed across the country. Therefore, it could provide the model for San Mateo County, using these subsidized programs to establish the best practices standards currently required for those that are state or federal-funded.

- ▶ The California Department of Education has already demonstrated its long-term intent by recent expansion funds made available. There is every reason to expect such expansion to continue as the economy recovers.

Organizational Chart

The following figure depicts the organizational structure of Scenario B:

Figure 2.
Scenario B: Proposed Organization Chart



Estimated Implementation Costs

Table 4.
Cost of a Fully Implemented Universal Preschool Initiative – Scenario B

(Based on 249 days per year)	No. Four-Year-Olds	Cost of Universal Preschool Initiative		
		Full Day	Half Day	Total
		\$50/day	\$27/day	(Full + Half)
SCENARIO B: State-Funded Preschools, Head Start and School-Linked Programs				
All four-year-olds	10,585			
Less: Children already participating in preschool (50%)	5,293			
Net Four-Year-Olds to Participate	5,293			
75% = Estimated Actual Participation/Funds Needed	3,970	\$24,707,025	\$13,345,155	\$38,052,180
Funding Required for Full Implementation				\$38,052,180
1st Year Funding (10%)	397	\$2,471,325	\$1,334,516	\$3,805,841

SOURCE: Child Care Needs Assessment, 1999-2000, San Mateo County except as noted.

In Scenario B, all four-year-olds in the County of San Mateo were identified in the Child Care Needs Assessment as 10,585. The difference between the number of all four-year-olds in Scenario A and Scenario B is accounted for by the fact that the nine collaboratives cover approximately 70% of San Mateo County. Again, it was estimated that 75% of the parents would elect to participate, resulting in 3,970 four-year-olds participating in the Universal Preschool program. Half of these four-year-olds in full-day programs would cost \$24,707,025 and the balance in half-day programs would cost \$13,345,155; a total estimate of \$38,052,180 would be required for full implementation. The phase-in approach of 10% in the first year results in a full-day portion cost of \$2,471,325, and a half-day cost of \$1,334,516. The total required estimated cost for the first year 10% phase-in would be \$3,805,841.

Funding Strategy

A major public investment will be required to fully fund Universal Preschool. Private funds (CFFC and other sources) can be used, through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process, or through contracts with selected school districts, to do the following:

- ▶ Expand programs from part to full time.
- ▶ Create wrap-around partnerships.
- ▶ Leverage funds for expanding existing sites or preparing new sites.
- ▶ Subsidize families who earn above the state guidelines but well below the self-sufficiency level (using a standardized sliding-scale fee structure), and children with developmental disabilities who have been assessed by the school (have an Individual Educational Program [IEP] plan).
- ▶ Provide assistance to programs wishing to access state or federal funding.
- ▶ Experiment with different ways of increasing access and improving quality for four-year-olds, within the linked infrastructure.

Strengths

- ▶ The greatest strength of this scenario is its ability to build on an existing infrastructure that is already supported with public funds, and targets families who would not be able to purchase quality care in the private market-place.
- ▶ Existing linkages with the elementary schools would help maintain the focus on school readiness.
- ▶ A “cohort” factor exists in this scenario which would allow for the tracking of results created by expansions and improvements to the system.

Weaknesses

- ▶ Designating the County Office of Education as the lead agency would create some anxiety in the non school-linked child care community about their inclusion in a Universal Preschool initiative.
- ▶ Family child care homes, an important part of the provider system in early care and education, would be problematic to integrate into this new scenario.

- ▶ A focus on expanding the system by including community-based programs would need to be created.

Scenario C: Expanded Voucher Payment System

The voucher payment approach would target children and families with incomes that fall outside of the state and federal subsidy guidelines. (See the Phase IV report, Funding Universal Preschool.) Parameters for inclusion would be established by the governance body, and are suggested at 75 to 100% of State Median Income (SMI). This would bring a new population into subsidized early care and education, as the state subsidies are currently capped at 75% of SMI. A standardized sliding-fee-scale structure would need to be adopted (see the YMCA Mid-Peninsula Income Guide in the Phase IV document as an example), and an eligibility process created or contracted out to an existing agency such as one already managing Alternative Payment program vouchers. A Universal Preschool office would not be required as the contracted agency would be responsible for administration. Priorities on who receives vouchers would be set by the governance body which would be composed of all key stakeholders, with especially strong representation from the child care field. An alternative approach to setting priorities would be to dispense vouchers to eligible families on a “first-come first-served” basis until all eligible funds are depleted.

Licensed centers and family child care homes would constitute the service providers who are eligible to receive vouchers for Scenario C, a direction which will increase access to quality care for low income working families. The Summer Transitional Program, “Kickoff to Kindergarten,” can be added. Similar to scenarios A and B, enrolled providers must agree to fully participate in trainings to promote school readiness for four-year-olds through planned, developmentally appropriate activities.

The contracting agency would be responsible for tracking and monitoring the use of vouchers for subsidies to four-year-olds, to collect data on issues related to duration, client satisfaction, and to arrange for training to promote school readiness activities of contracted provider participants. Outcome and reporting requirements would be established by the CFFC.

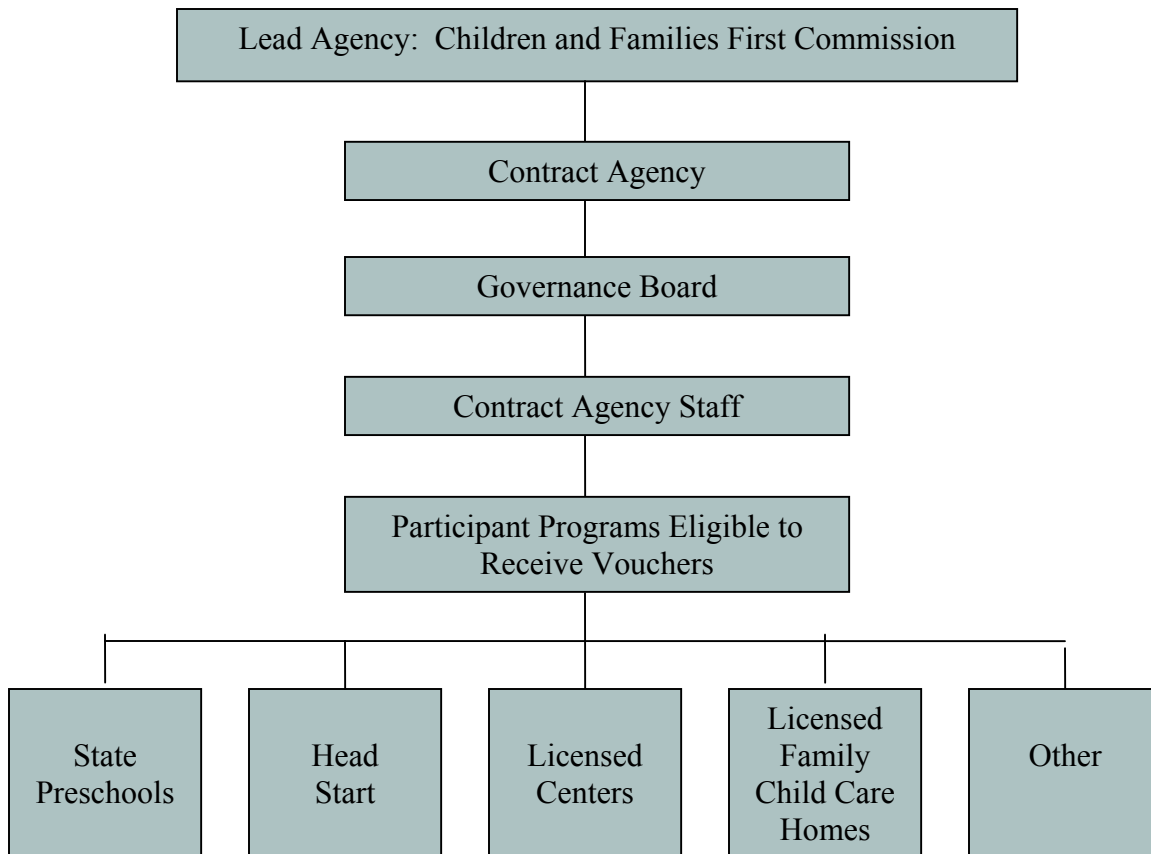
Rationale

- ▶ This scenario would expand access to existing licensed resources in the community, and would provide needed subsidies for working poor families who are currently ineligible for state funding. While 25% above current state caps is suggested in the costing out of this scenario, the cap can be raised over time as more funds become available.
- ▶ The high cost of living in San Mateo County makes early care and education services less affordable than in other parts of the state (see Phase III Environmental Scan report). More families would be able to use quality formal curriculum-based early care and education services if they could afford it. State and federal low-level subsidy caps create an access barrier, one that is unrelated to the cost of living.
- ▶ If all preschool and child care programs were open to both subsidized and non-subsidized families, then access to quality programs for preschoolers would be more equitably distributed. Families who are currently unable to afford them would gain access to programs designed for all children.

Organizational Chart

The following figure depicts the organizational structure of Scenario C:

Figure 3.
Scenario C: Proposed Organization Chart



Estimated Implementation Costs

Table 5.
Cost of a Fully Implemented Universal Preschool Initiative – Scenario C

(Based on 249 days per year)	No. Four-Year-Olds	Cost of Universal Preschool Initiative		
		Full Day	Half Day	Total
		\$50/day	\$27/day	(Full + Half)
SCENARIO C: Expanded Voucher Payment System				
All four-year-olds	10,585			
% Families Income \$35,000 to \$49,000 - 11.2% ⁷	11%			
Est. No. four-year-olds between 75% and 100% SMI	1,164			
75% = Estimated Actual Participation/Funds Needed	873	<i>See Table 6 below for explanation.</i>		
Funding Required for Full Implementation				\$2,348,693

SOURCE: Child Care Needs Assessment, 1999-2000, San Mateo County except as noted.

For Scenario C, a family of three with incomes between \$35,100 and \$46,800 (75 to 100% of State Median Income) constituted 11% of all San Mateo County families. This percentage was used to estimate the number of four-year-olds who would be eligible for subsidized care, resulting in 1,164 four-year-olds. Actual participation rate at 75% of the total eligible four-year-olds was estimated to be 873 children.

Table 6.
Detailed Cost Estimate for Scenario C

SCENARIO C: Expanded Voucher Payment System							
Family Income per month	Parent Fee	% Four-Year-Olds	No. Four-Year-Olds	Full Day	Half Day	Subsidy Required	
						Full Day	Half Day
\$2936-3102	50%	20	174	87	87	\$541,575	\$292,451
\$3103-3270	60%	20	176	88	88	\$438,240	\$236,650
\$3271-3430	70%	20	176	88	88	\$328,680	\$177,487
\$3431-3602	80%	20	174	87	87	\$216,630	\$116,980
\$3603-3767	100%	20	173	86.5	86.5	0	\$0
			873	436.5	436.5	\$1,525,125	\$823,568
Funding Required for Full Implementation						\$2,348,693	

Having estimated the total number of four-year-olds (see previous paragraph with Table 5), the number of four-year-olds was fairly equally divided for each income range, i.e., between 173 and 176 children per range. Utilizing the parent fees on the YMCA of the Mid-Peninsula sliding fee scale (see Appendix B in the Phase IV report), 50% of the four-year-olds in each of the income ranges was considered full-day at \$50/day and 50% half-day at \$27/day, resulting in \$1,525,125 for full-day and \$823,568 for half-day. The total cost of this scenario was estimated to be \$2,348,693 for full implementation

Funding Strategy

CFFC would contract, through a Request for Proposals process, with one or more agencies that currently manage voucher payments for child care.

- ▶ All administrative costs, which include eligibility determination, recruitment of providers, ongoing provider education, payments etc. would be assumed by that agency.
- ▶ Other funds that could be leveraged would be added to the total subsidy available, or designated for specific purposes such as training.
- ▶ Only licensed early care and education programs (centers and family homes) that provide services to four-year-olds could be designated to provide vouchered services to families that fall within the subsidy-eligible group.

Strengths

- ▶ Scenario C would expand access to licensed quality care to working poor families who are not currently eligible for state subsidies.
- ▶ If provider quality improvements activities are required, this plan would have some effect on standards of care among those who choose to accept vouchers.

Weaknesses

- ▶ Funds for vouchers create dollars that remain with the parent and travel from one location to another, reducing the possibility for significant provider or facility improvement, expansion or experimentation.
- ▶ Substantial costs would be consumed by creating another eligibility determination process; all costs for state subsidies would have to be maintained separately from non-state funds.
- ▶ Creating a program based on the presence of (temporary) subsidies only would not expand, improve or even stabilize the system
- ▶ No “cohort” factor is present which would allow for tracking of children between preschool and kindergarten..

IV. COMMENTARY

The three scenarios presented above satisfy, to one degree or another, the "Operating Assumptions" articulated at the beginning of this report. Each has strengths and weaknesses to be overcome; it will be up to the program designing body to determine which direction best meets the needs of the county. It is anticipated that a different scenario, combining parts of what has been suggested in the three models presented here, will emerge from the deliberations. In order to further "objectify" the choices, the following table has been created, using the original list of required elements for a plan (see the Phase I Literature Review) to compare the scenarios.

Table 7.
A Comparison of Three Scenarios by Program Elements

Element	Scenario A	Scenario B	Scenario C
Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet local community needs for early care and education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Readiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand access to regulated early care and education programs
Target Population/ Eligibility Determinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four- year-olds Determined by local community collaboratives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four- year-olds State and federal subsidy eligible, up to 75% SMI Non-subsidy eligible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four- year-olds Family income between 75% and 100% SMI
Lead Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peninsula Partnership for Children, Youth and Families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> County Office of Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contracted out: Agency(ies) to be determined
Service Links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State preschools Head Start School-sited centers Summer Transitional Readiness Program State-subsidized centers Others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State preschools Head Start School-sited centers Summer Transitional Readiness Program State-subsidized centers Others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensed centers and family homes Summer Transitional Readiness Program
Parent Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes. Sliding-scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes. Sliding-scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes. Co-payments
Who Can Teach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State guidelines Other options: local decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher standards set according to California Department of Education guidelines for state-subsidized programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards set by Department of Social Services, Child Care Licensing
Basic Unit of Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Half-day Whole-day <p><i>(Distribution between 2 options to be locally determined)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Half-day (50% of enrollees) Whole-day (50% of enrollees) Minimum: 3.5 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Half-day Whole-day
Quality Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State-funded program requirements Department of Social Services licensing guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set by Department of Education state-funded program requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Social Services, Child Care Licensing standards
How Funds are Allocated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for Proposal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for Proposal Negotiate with cities/local school districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create voucher system: contract agency
Program Extensions (Wrap Around)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need: To be determined at local level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child care, before and after care program Immunizations and basic health screening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None required
Training	<p><i>Required:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Readiness Social, emotional and developmental needs of preschoolers Special needs 	<p><i>Required:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Readiness Social, emotional and developmental needs of preschoolers Special needs 	<p><i>Required</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Readiness Social, emotional and developmental needs of preschoolers Special needs
Role of Universal Preschool Program Director / Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff governance body Provide technical assistance to participating collaboratives Coordinate RFP process Monitor program compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff governance body Collaborate in all county-wide efforts to expand system Coordinate RFP process Monitor program compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff governance body Oversee voucher system and ensure credibility Maintain ongoing data on characteristics of users

V. STEPS TO GETTING STARTED

Decisions need to be made about how the program will be funded, and how much is available under what conditions. These decisions include all potential sources of funding for direct services, and for indirect services such as administration, training, technical assistance and resource development, some of which can be provided in the form of “in-kind” contributions. The Phase IV report has attempted to summarize funding data available from the California Department of Education and from San Mateo County sources of information. The estimates of costs used in the final report are based on an assumption that 75% of all four-year-olds would eventually be enrolled in the program options, phased-in over time. The income estimates would be expanded by the possibility of leveraged funds obtained through private sources and public grant opportunities, and by parent fees. Although nationally it is estimated that 60% of early care and education costs are paid by parent fees, and eight percent of subsidized costs in California are paid by parent fees, we are unable to estimate the full cost recovery for these scenarios. The reader is referred back to the Phase IV “Funding Universal Preschool” report for an overview of funding sources and strategies.

Step 1

Convene a standing “Design Group” which includes representatives from all key stakeholder groups, and work to complete a clear and marketable plan for San Mateo’s Universal Preschool Program. Some initial work has been done and should continue. Include in the plan all of the following elements:

- ▶ The program goal.
- ▶ The funds available to achieve the goal, and how they are to be used.
- ▶ The target population(s): If phased, in what sequence.
- ▶ How eligibility will be determined.
- ▶ The lead agency auspice.
- ▶ The governance structure.
- ▶ Where services will be delivered (school sites, licensed centers, family homes, other).
- ▶ Who will be able to teach in the linked programs i.e. credentials, training.

- ▶ What core content (curriculum) will be required for all linked programs.
- ▶ What the basic unit of service will be i.e. number of hours.
- ▶ How extended child care services will be wrapped around the basic unit.
- ▶ What other standards will be required of linked providers e.g. inclusion of children with special needs, number of months of operation (short versus long year).
- ▶ Whether parents will pay fees (based on regional cost of care), and how determined e.g. a single sliding-fee-scale structure.
- ▶ How linked programs will be selected e.g. a competitive versus an invited process.

Step 2

Set a target date for implementation, which may use a phase-in approach. In the planning process, set achievable goals for Year One, Year Two, Year Three etc., related to funds available for expansion and for leveraging. Understanding that parents generally make their early care and education plans for their children on a school year basis following summer vacations, a start date similar to the beginning of the school year would be reasonable. Enrollment may begin at this point, but would be open throughout the fiscal year (249 school days) to ensure maximum use of all funded spaces. Enrollment forms should be standardized across all programs participating in the Universal Preschool program’s network of service providers, in order to enable short and long-term tracking of program effects and contracted or collaborated outcome research.

Step 3

Select a lead agency or agencies, and establish a governance structure, representing key stakeholders and the consumer, and create a Universal Preschool office (for scenarios A and B). Hire staff and establish an operational presence, visible to the public. In the Phase II Key Informant Study, interviewees were asked for their suggestions for a lead agency. A wide variety of suggestions were given; the list below represents those organizations most frequently mentioned. Several combinations of agencies were also offered.

- ▶ San Mateo County Office of Education
- ▶ Child care Coordinating Council

- ▶ Peninsula Partnership Council
- ▶ Children and Families First Commission
- ▶ A newly formed collaborative or consortium with elementary school districts playing an important role

The selection of lead agency is dependent, to a good extent, on the model selected for implementation. For example, if the model is one in which the state and federal funded preschools and programs are the core, then it might be reasonable to select the County Office of Education as the lead agency, as they are the current grantee for 11 community preschools funded by the California Department of Education, and a total of fifty-six programs are currently operating on school sites. Lead agency selection will include considerations of available resources for technical assistance and training for participating organizations, as well as establishment of a staff and separate office to allow a certain degree of independence.

Step 4

Begin to carry out a community awareness and information campaign. An organized effort needs to be mounted to raise community awareness of the need and known benefits of a prekindergarten experience for four-year-olds, and to inform the community of the plan which has been created. Special attention should be given to reach the potential users of the program, through whatever media or outreach communication efforts are most appropriate. Consideration must be given to the ways in which the diverse ethnic populations can best be reached. Some obvious routes are the elementary and middle schools, local churches and supermarkets in selected neighborhoods. While some community awareness outreach has been carried out through the Community Conversations sponsored by the San Mateo Children and Families First Commission and the Child Care Action Campaign, the focus needed for implementation will be on broadcasting the positive outcome findings of national and local studies, which include information obtained from the School Readiness Assessment Pilot Initiative conducted in 2001 for the Peninsula Partnership for Children, Youth and Families. A useful resource for selecting outreach approaches is “The Seven Lessons of Early Childhood Public Engagement” published by the Families and Work Institute, 2000. The various collaboratives and community action

groups listed in the Key Informant Study (Phase II) would be logical partners in this campaign to inform the public.

Step 5

Create a Request for Proposals (RFP) and disseminate to potential participants in the scenario selected. The RFP should clearly reflect the conditions selected in the expansion plan and how the funds can be used. Collaboration between school districts and community providers should be promoted as a most desirable approach.

Step 6

Inform the community of new opportunities and programs for their children. See Step 5 for strategies on delivering community outreach information. The plan must be simply presented to the public, again featuring outcome gains for four-year-olds and quality of participating programs.

Step 7

Track the outcomes of efforts to promote school readiness, using the piloted school readiness instrument which is already in increasing use (developed by Applied Survey Research for the Peninsula Partnership for Children, Youth and Families, and co-funded by the San Mateo Children and Families First Commission). The school readiness assessment instrument will be used in 35 schools during fiscal year 2002-2003.

Step 8

Consider contracting or collaborating with a Bay Area university, college or research organization to conduct a long-range outcome study which measures the effects of increasing access to preschool education on a number of educational and social indicators. Similar studies were reported in the Phase I Universal Preschool Literature Review in the section on “Outcomes.” These reports continue to be issued by state and national researchers, all

confirming the gains to be made in school readiness. Findings should be reported to the larger community in order to continually mobilize support for efforts to expand the services.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Over the past several months an intensive study was undertaken to test the feasibility of creating a movement towards Universal Preschool in San Mateo County. A number of factors entered into this decision to explore such options, not the least of which were the high cost of living in the county, the large numbers of families who are in the workforce in order to subsist, the growing “school readiness” initiatives, and the long-standing concern of policy-makers for children’s needs.

The question of feasibility was approached from a number of different directions which included a review of national initiatives, the views of 32 key San Mateo County informants and three model states, a systematic “scan” of supports and barriers in the environment, a summary of financing resources and options, and the creation of three possible scenarios to chart directions for how the county can proceed to achieve its goals. Finally, steps to take in reaching the goals have been outlined.

The idea of Universal Preschool is relatively new to the United States, though it has been implemented for many years in other developed nations. Like all social change, the awareness of need in a new movement is considerably in advance of changes which need to take place in the infrastructure; resistance to change is to be expected. In this instance, the resistance is located in the idea of lowering the age of entry into formal schooling, an idea which has yet to be fully implemented across the country for kindergarten, and the commitment of even more public funds.

The recent research findings on the critical brain development which occurs in the earliest years have added urgency to the movement, as they have been linked to the growing concern nationally for early school failure and drop-out in an economic context that demands educated and well-trained workers. These findings have been joined by the critical assessments of the quality of care available for very young children, assessments that have frequently found early care and education woefully deficient. While public awareness has been growing, the public will to demand funding necessary to fully implement a good quality early care and education system

has not yet been formed. Such a system must be supported by government; unfortunately, the current timing, which has brought budget cuts at all levels, is not guaranteed to move forward. Interim steps should be undertaken, towards what would be the most optimal system to serve families across the county and in the direction which will continue to move the system forward. However, in spite of the barriers noted above, movement towards a Universal Preschool system in the United States is underway, and no doubt California will be among those states which will take the steps to make this benefit to children a reality.

In September of 2002 the scenarios were presented at a meeting of key stakeholders in San Mateo County hosted by the San Mateo Children and Families First Commission and attended by representatives from the feasibility study funders, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. Good discussion followed, ending in the strong recommendation to address the basic questions which must be answered for a viable plan and before a lead agency can be determined (see Step 1 on Page 30 of the document). Next steps are currently underway: Two day-long Universal Preschool Design Group meetings have been set to address the plan elements referenced above, and to invite a panel of national experts to share their experiences in planning and implementing their Universal Preschool programs.

ENDNOTES

¹ Career Ladders. (2000). *Child Care Workers: San Mateo County*.

www.careerladders.org/2000/San_Mateo/ChildCareWorkers2000.pdf

² Center for the Child Care Workforce. (2002). *A Profile of the San Mateo County Child Care Workforce*. www.smcoe.k12.ca.us/news/workforce.pdf

³ B.T. Commercial Real Estate. (2002). *San Mateo County R&D Report*.

www.btcommercial.com/reports/San%20Mateo%20County%20RD%20Q02%20Summary.pdf

⁴ San Mateo County. (2000). *Child Care Needs Assessment for San Mateo County 1999- 2000*. San Mateo Child Care Coordinating Council of San Mateo County, Inc. and the San Mateo County Child Care Partnership Council.

⁵ Applied Survey Research. (2001). *School Readiness Assessment Pilot Initiative*. The Peninsula Partnership for Children, Youth and Families.

⁶ Applied Survey Research. (2001). *School Readiness Assessment Pilot Initiative*. The Peninsula Partnership for Children, Youth and Families.

⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.