

Starting Smart and Strong

Every child should grow up healthy and ready for school.

The foundations for a lifetime of health and learning are built in the first five years of life, and adults are key to making those foundations strong.

That's why the David and Lucile Packard Foundation is partnering with three California communities — Fresno, Oakland, and San Jose — to develop and test solutions that support parents, caregivers, and educators as they prepare children to be healthy and ready for school, with self-confidence and a love of learning.

Why Support for the Early Years Matters

Young children's brains and bodies develop rapidly in the first five years. When we provide high-quality early learning and health opportunities during this critical window, we create better chances for health and happiness throughout a child's life.

But many families face barriers to these opportunities. Only 50 percent of California children are enrolled in preschool, and fewer than 1 in 3 young children receive vital screenings to determine if they are reaching milestones in their development.

At the Packard Foundation, we're dedicated to making sure that all young children have what they need to grow and learn.

Our Approach

We firmly believe that all of the adults in children's lives — parents, caregivers, and educators — help create the healthy, nurturing, and engaging connections that children need to grow. By ensuring the adults in a child's life have information, resources, and support, we can help all children reach their full potential in school and in life.

Starting Smart and Strong is built on four pillars:

- Professional development and training for caregivers and educators
- Resources and support for parents, family, friends, neighbors, and other informal caregivers
- Access to quality health care and developmental screenings
- Strong and durable early learning systems and a plan to scale what works



Uniting and Accelerating Early Learning and Healthy Development Efforts in Three Communities

Starting Smart and Strong is a shared, community-driven commitment to ensure every child in Fresno, San Jose, and Oakland grows up healthy and ready for kindergarten. Over ten years, local collaboratives bring together public and private supporters to create early learning networks, to test and develop solutions, and to take collective action to create lasting change.

Since 2014, each of the communities has convened a wide range of service providers, school district staff, community members, advocates and funders. Here's just some of what they're working on:

Oakland:

- ✓ Professional development and coaching for educators and caregivers
- ✓ Developmental screenings and supports for children
- ✓ Leadership development and capacity building among parents, family, friends, and neighbors
- ✓ Quality improvement ratings and resources
- ✓ Innovative trauma informed classroom strategies

San Jose:

- ✓ Aligning district efforts to Educare California at Silicon Valley: a center for early learning, family support, and professional development
- ✓ Professional development in support of students' social and emotional learning
- ✓ Developmental screenings and supports for children
- ✓ Student data tracking system
- ✓ Mapping the community's informal care network

Fresno:

- ✓ Interagency learning collaborative in support of dual language learners
- ✓ Building continuity between early childhood programs and K-12
- ✓ Outreach and training for parents
- ✓ Support for family, friends, and neighbors who care for children
- ✓ Developmental screenings and supports for children



Looking Ahead

Changing the landscape of early childhood education community-by-community is just the start. By developing and testing early learning and health strategies in all kinds of communities, Packard Foundation's Starting Smart and Strong strives to identify universal best practices, share these learnings across California to scale impact, and create a stronger system of support for young children through significant shifts in policy — ultimately benefiting every child, parent, caregiver, and educator in our state by 2025.

For more information contact: cfcgm@packard.org