

# preschool

The Roadmap to Success

•  
by Lynn Machon  
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## RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

California Department  
of Education  
cde.ca.gov

First 5 California  
ccfc.ca.gov

First 5 El Dorado County  
first5eldorado.com

First 5 Placer County  
placer.ca.gov/cfc

First 5 Sacramento County  
sackids.saccounty.net

Folsom Montessori School  
916-351-0345

Granite Bay Montessori  
gbmontessori.com

United States  
Department of Education  
ed.gov



To say that young children are impressionable is a blatant understatement. From birth to age five, the physical framework and wiring of a child's brain develops largely based upon his or her experiences during those early years.

Quality experiences are the goal of First 5 California's investment of nearly one billion dollars into affordable, quality preschools for all.

First 5 Executive Director Kris Perry explains, "A series of studies over a period of 40 years shows that children who participate in high quality preschool programs are less likely to be in the court system, are less likely to require social services, are more likely to graduate from high school and college, and are more likely to make higher earnings."

Experts say it's the basic lessons learned in

preschool that set the stage for success in school, and in life.

### How Preschool Prepares Children

A preschool teacher for 32 years, Lise Witthaus first opened the Folsom Montessori School in 1980. As she notes proudly, she now teaches children of former students.

"The most important thing a child learns in preschool is how to be part of a school community," says Witthaus. "They learn how to be in a group, and how to participate and take cues from their peers." And key, she says, they learn how to take direction that's given to the class, not just to the individual child. According to educators, those skills must be learned in order to succeed in elementary school.

Additionally, the importance of academic ba-

sics such as reading, math and penmanship cannot be ignored. As First 5's Perry points out, "School has gotten increasingly difficult." Perry suggests that the curriculum most parents were taught when they were in first grade, is what today's kindergartners are learning. "So the more parents can help their child prepare ahead of time, the better they will do the whole time they are in school."

### Preschool and Kindergarten Readiness Programs

Parents researching preschool choices will find hundreds of private preschools in the Greater Sacramento area. For eligible families, the federally-funded Head Start or State Preschool programs provide free early education and kindergarten preparedness classes.

In Placer County, the Eureka Union School District has teamed with Star Enrichment to offer economical year-round preschool and/or kindergarten readiness programs at Maidu, Oakhills and Olive Ranch schools in Roseville/Granite Bay and Foskett Ranch School in Lincoln.

And over the summer, free transitional programs offered through county school districts give future kindergartners a chance to visit their new school, spend time in group circles and meet their new teacher.

El Dorado County's summer camps are provided at five different schools, and the county's First 5 commission produced a video called "Off to School: Kindergarten is Cool," available on the county Web site.

### What Parents Can Do at Home

Whether or not a child attends preschool, caregivers can play a key role in kindergarten preparation. Many ideas are offered through First 5's *Kit for New Parents*, available online or through the First 5 county offices.

"The best advice is to talk, talk, talk... all the time," says Perry. "Narrate the world. If you have a young child, don't keep your thoughts to yourself." She says the number of words young children are exposed to correlates to their success in school and life.

To help build social skills, parents also should provide ample opportunities for peer time in the form of playgroups, story time, and activities at a local park or pool.

Taking simple steps now, to enrich the precious formative years of a child's life, gives the best possible chance for success in the future. •

**YOU CAN BE READY TO RETIRE OR NOT. READY IS BETTER.**

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