

June 8, 2021

To: The Measure X Community Advisory Board

From: Early Childhood Panel Organizations – First 5 Contra Costa, CSB/EHSD, HS, CocoKids, and Parent Voices

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This memo provides follow-up information in response to a question posed to the panel presenting the Early Childhood Gaps, Needs and Funding Opportunities at the May 26 Measure X Community Advisory meeting. The question posed was about current strategies and efforts to ensure culturally sensitive and responsive services for young children. While the panel responded, we felt that supplemental information was necessary to comprehensively respond and inform Measure X CAB members about current efforts to build adult competencies and learning conditions to ensure cultural and developmentally appropriate practices.

Supporting children's home language and culture is critical to their social, emotional, and academic development of children; therefore, our partners throughout the county employ a variety of strategies at varying degrees to ensure the cultural needs of children and their families are taken into consideration. The following are a few important examples:

1. **Child care staff represent the families served in this county:** The Community Services Bureau (CSB) of the Employment and Human Services Department is the largest child care provider in the county, serving over 2,000 children each day through Head Start, Early Head Start, and State subsidized programs. The staff in their 16 centers represent the communities they serve by ensuring that at least one staff members in each classroom speaks the language of the majority of children in the classroom. In cases where that is not possible, staff work with the families to develop strategies to best support home language and culture.

Further, CocoKids as the resource and referral agency for the county, screens over 800 provider demographics in order to meet families' cultural and linguistic needs, so that when families choose the best childcare for their family, they have that information available to them.

2. **Capacity Building:** through professional development and capacity building, those working with young children develop a deeper understanding of the value of incorporating the child's home culture into their everyday curriculum.

Specialized trainings and workshops focusing on anti-bias curriculum, cultural humility, cultural responsiveness, and trauma informed practices are provided on-going, county-wide, through the Contra Costa County Quality Matters Initiative (QM). QM is an interagency partnership including the Contra Costa County Office of Education, CocoKids, First 5, and the three Community Colleges in the County, and other service providers. Through the QM Initiative, the collective agencies engage and support family child care providers, centers (public and private), and family, friends and neighbors by providing coaching, technical assistance, professional development and other supports with the end goal of improving the quality of learning settings for young children

Private and public programs, such as CSB, across the county implement Creative Curriculum, Program for Infant and Toddler Caregiving, the Teaching Pyramid, among others, that embed culturally and developmentally relevant practices into the everyday curriculum.

Additionally, county-wide initiatives funded through First 5 Contra Costa build provider capacity and knowledge for center-based and family child care providers. The following are two examples of First 5 sponsored culturally focused initiatives:

**Dual Language Learner (DLL) Initiative** – the DLL is comprised of three large strategies to support children’s home language and culture in early learning settings. Forty-three Contra Costa providers are enrolled in a two-unit dual language course that unpacks implicit bias, explores creative ways to learn from and with families, and discusses sound DLL assessment and bilingual language development with an emphasis on the critical relationship between home language and culture and children’s healthy sense of identity.

**Ready Kids East County (RKEC) Initiative** - RKEC takes a systems-wide approach to improve the chances that African American and Black young children in East Contra Costa County will be ready for kindergarten physically, academically, socially, and emotionally. The Initiative engages parents and community members in uncovering and addressing the complex interpersonal, institutional, community, social, environmental, and public policy factors that perpetuate inequities in school readiness for African American and Black children in East Contra Costa County. The Ready Kids East County Initiative plans to continue researching and reflecting on promising programming and curricula that center Black experiences, hosting learning communities, and connecting families to culturally relevant school readiness resources through Parent Cafés and experiences. Foundational is the core belief power should be redistributed to child

In closing, the panel wanted to provide supplemental information to this important question related to culture and race through this memo, as we feel proud of existing efforts that lift the cultures of our families and their children county-wide. We appreciate the opportunity to be able to further describe examples of programs, practices and initiatives that support the demographic diversity of the children and their families in Contra Costa.