

Early Learning Investment Area - Birth to 5-year-olds

Current Strategies - 2004 Levy

- Full and half day preschool program for low-income 4 year olds
- Child care subsidy for children in half day preschool
- Teacher training, coaching, mentoring and technical assistance
- Additional compensation for child care staff
- Home visits with low income families with 2 or 3 year olds; twice a week to strengthen early literacy skills

Recommended Strategies - 2011 Levy

- Continue to improve early learning services for families by providing better training to preschool teachers and others who take care of children, using assessments to find out how well we are preparing children for school, and reaching out to families to provide them better opportunities to help their children get started on learning.
- Continue providing preschool slots for 4-year-olds.
- Expand programs that work with families in their homes to develop learning skills for their young children.

New Strategies

- Provide health and mental health screenings and follow-up for children in preschool, child care, and home settings.
- Provide academic support for children not at grade level and help smooth their transition from pre-school to Kindergarten and from Kindergarten to 1st grade.

Why these strategies?

Research on early learning is clear: The achievement gap is present before students enter preschool. Assessment tools implemented through current Levy investments indicate that some children enter preschool two to three years behind in their receptive English language skills. Many children also struggle in other developmental areas. To close these gaps, current Levy investments work with families in their homes to promote early learning skills, provide preschool opportunities for low-income families, increase the quality of classrooms and preschool teachers through professional development, and provide kindergarten transition support. Increasing numbers of children have been meeting kindergarten readiness guidelines adopted by the City and its partners. The

Committee recommends continuing and enhancing these strategies. In order to reach the preschool children with the greatest needs, the new Levy will expand its quality and professional development focus to include children served in less formal settings, such as home day care centers and those cared for by family members, friends, and neighbors (known as FFN care). The Committee also recommends the addition of two new strategies for early learning. First is a health and mental health screening and services component, to identify and meet children's health and behavior needs as early as possible. Second is a kindergarten transition program, to ensure that children identified as struggling when they exit preschool are given the supports they need to catch up and be successful in the early elementary grades.

Research & Best Practice

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