

# OTHER STATES SHOW THE VALUE OF PRESCHOOL FOR ALL

BY TONY THURMOND & KEVIN MCCARTY

We have school-age daughters who were fortunate to attend preschool and we've seen firsthand the difference it's made.

Every child in California deserves that same opportunity, and that's why we are advocating for pre-kindergarten education for all kids.

Our children are doing well academically. But too many families don't have these same opportunities and children who start behind stay behind.

More than 30 percent of California's low-income 4-year-olds and 66 percent of low-income 3-year-olds lack access to quality pre-k. According to [Stanford's Getting Down to Facts II](#) report, these children enter kindergarten unprepared for school and seldom catch up. This achievement gap has long-term repercussions, not just for children's long-term success, but also for our state's economy as a whole.

Investments in quality early learning help break the cycle of poverty, close the achievement gap and stop the school to prison pipeline.

It doesn't have to be this way.

As the new legislative session opens, we intend to put the needs of the youngest Californians and their family's front and center. It's fundamental to helping California reclaim its historic tradition of leading the nation in education, especially for its most vulnerable children.

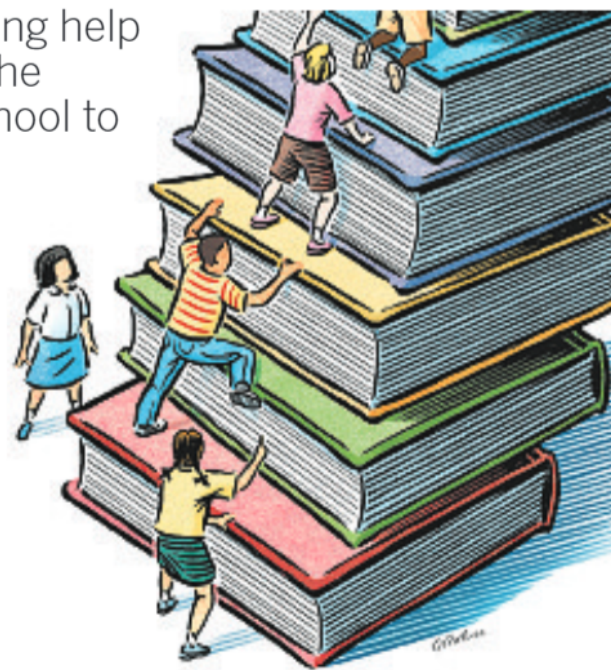
We, along with leaders in early learning and education, completed a tour to New York City, New Jersey, and Boston to listen and learn about best practices from exemplary pre-k programs. What we found during these visits is proof that investments in quality early learning help break the cycle of poverty, close the achievement gap and stop the school to prison pipeline.

This East Coast tour casts a long shadow on how California is addressing the needs of its early learning system. It made clear that we are falling far short of supporting our youngest learners.

In New Jersey, we learned that disadvantaged children who completed two years of preschool were narrowing the gap in academic performance with their middle-class peers.

All three pre-K programs shared these key pillars of success:

- Expanded access to robust early learning programs.
- Higher teacher pay and program rates.
- Ample teacher education and training to support responsive interactions and engaging learning experiences.



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- An investment in inviting facilities.

All three states stressed the importance of "mixed-delivery systems" that use schools and community providers to care for infants

and toddlers through to preschool; offer "wrap-around" services that allow for longer-day child care and social services for working families; and offer dual language learner

programs for kids whose home language is not English.

We came back convinced that California must institute pre-K for All by investing in those same four pillars embraced by other states and also build upon these models to address California's diverse landscape to serve working families and address our severe shortage in infant and toddler care.

There is a clear choice we must make. We can continue our current course of action, which helps some, or we can take bold action and help every young child in California.

We can and must do more. Our collective future depends on it.

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