

The Sad State of our State and the Promise of Early Childhood
Education, Young Children's Forum
Pittsburg CA
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Good morning. And thank you for the important work each and every one of you does in our great state. Thank you all for the amazing difference you have made for the children of California in your support of education generally and early childhood education in Contra Costa in particular. Yours may be the most important work we could be doing if we are to continue to achieve the promise of California greatness.

I want to add my personal thanks to all who continue to believe and to volunteer in the battle to provide Universal Preschool in CA. Back in 1997, I was assembling a Universal Preschool Task force and so many wonderful people contacted me to say they wanted to be included on that endeavor. Your focus on early learning from birth is a beacon to what each county in our state should be doing.

Sadly, all over California we are in danger of taking giant steps backward as penny-wise pound foolish decisions are being made across our state and our nation. Too many people think what we are doing is “nice” but not essential. What we are doing with preschool and in early education happens to be the most important work of our time.

Ironically, people who lacked concrete research about the value of the great educational initiatives they implemented made many of our most important educational investments in the history of California and the United States. They lacked research but they had something more important: vision, courage and a sense of responsibility for future generations. So I want to set the stage for today by looking back in history.

In 1862, during the darkest days of the Civil War, President

Abraham Lincoln had good reason to limit funding on things like education. Instead, he started the Land Grant College System with his signature on the Morrill Act. This was a measure his predecessor James Buchanan had vetoed. One could speculate that Lincoln had even more reason to veto it, mired as he was in a great Civil War. But he had the vision and the courage and the heart to dream for our future. UC Berkeley, UC Davis, UC Riverside...all thanks to Lincoln.

In 1865, while America was reeling from the costs and losses in the Civil War, we did not hunker down and say, "We cannot afford things like investing in education." Instead America became one of the first countries on earth to invest in compulsory public education. State by state, we began educating all of our people. And America prospered because of those brave choices. We had no research. We had courage, vision and heart.

The GI Bill of Rights was signed into law in 1944. It doubled the number of people in college. President Roosevelt was criticized for the cost, but the result was American prosperity. He did not have research to point the way. What Roosevelt did was courageous.

Eisenhower signed a giant college student loan program in 1958. He was in the midst of a Cold War and a Space Race and could easily have dismissed this huge loan program as an extravagance. Instead he embraced it. The act was called the National Defense Education Act. Ike did not have lots of research. He had heart.

Meanwhile, out in California, our leaders were investing in k-12 and in the finest college and university system the world has ever seen.

Today I want to talk about something that is hard, yes, that is expensive, but something even more important than that giant leap for mankind that John Kennedy asked us to make when he called for a man on the moon by the end of the decade that was the 1960's. A generation ago he was criticized, roundly criticized. But he had vision. Today we praise him.

Today I want to talk about focusing on the youngest children in our midst. Yes, it is about universal preschool but it is actually much

bigger than that. It is about children from conception through age 18.

Something that this group knows so much about is the importance of care and development before the age of 5 and you know that it is a constituency that has been sadly underrepresented and under supported in America. I will be talking about some things that will be hard to do, but that previous generations would have had the courage, the heart and the vision to support. The difference is that we have the research to know what to do and why we should do it. Our ancestors lacked the research. They took a chance. For us this is not risky business. We know exactly what we should do.

I now believe that instead of having a simple K-12 system in California and America, we should have a pre-K-12 system in California. We should have comprehensive pre-natal care through high school plan for keeping our children healthy, well-educated and developmentally served.

I believe high quality education should be available from age 3 through passage of a strong high school exit exam. For the first two years, the system should be a high quality system with college-educated teachers with the same level of training as kindergarten through 12th grade are required to have. I believe that while the first 2 years should be universally available, they should not be mandatory. However, kindergarten, which is universally available, should become mandatory and full day.

I further believe that we can offset some of the cost, by doing that which the New York Times reported on last fall. That is allow students that can pass a rigorous high school exit exam, to graduate at 16 or 17 and proceed to college or to postsecondary training of another sort.

The research is clear. America needs to change its education system if it is to compete globally in the years to come.

Let me begin with why I believe California must start schooling earlier.

The contributions of our researchers over the last several years and the contribution of hundreds and thousands of preschool providers, while appreciated in France, Italy and many of our competitor nations, is not well appreciated in the United States. A recent poll of Americans conducted by the Pearson Foundation found that Americans' perceptions about the inequality that exists between low-income children and their more affluent peers are quite uninformed. "Seventy three percent of Americans **wrongly** believe that if children enter kindergarten unprepared, they will catch up in elementary school." (Jumpstart poll 2009 quoted in prweb.com)

Let me set the stage.

The facts about California's young children and their families:

1 of 5 children ages 0-5 live in poverty.

- 1 of 2 children ages 0-5 live with working parents.
- Eight of ten working mothers with preschool children use some form of non-parental childcare arrangement.
- One in four young children have four or more risk factors that jeopardize their chances for success in school and in life. Some of those risk factors are:
 - 1. Incomes below the poverty line,
 - 2. Parents who lack a high school education,
 - 3. Households where no parent has full time employment,
 - 4. Living with a single parent or without parents,
 - 5. Families receiving welfare assistance, and/or
 - 6. Families who lack health insurance.
- There is a special need for child care and development programs for populations with special needs, such as sick care, emergency care, care for children with disabilities, and care during nontraditional hours or off-hour care.
- In January (January 2-8, 2010), the *Economist* magazine noted this, "...there is evidence that America and Britain, the countries that combine high female employment with reluctance to involve the state in child care, serve their children especially poorly. A report by Unicef in 2007 on children in rich countries found that America and Britain had some of the lowest scores for 'well-being'." (p. 51)



One of the little known facts in America is that there was a landmark social experiment in America during the Second World War. America had over 3100 federal and state funded child care centers that served perhaps as many as 1.6 million children in all 48 states. Why? Because record numbers of women were in the workforce during WWII.



A far higher percentage of women with preschoolers are working today. By the way, California was the only state where publicly funded centers continued after the war according to historian Shirley Ann Wilson Moore. The federal support was withdrawn in March of 1946.



It is ironic that the United States is today one of only a few industrialized nations in the world without a high quality, comprehensive system of childcare and child development. Somehow we knew during WWII that when women went into the workforce, we should provide care for their children. It is ironic that today with a higher percentage of women in the workforce there is opposition to this idea.



What are the benefits of early education for three and four-year old children?

What we know about early childhood and its effects on adulthood are truly remarkable. Unlike our ancestors in 1865 who guessed that compulsory public education would be a good experiment, we know as a certainty that early childhood experiences shape the adult. But I want to talk first about that period of time before preschool to begin with.

Indeed we know now children begin learning **EVEN BEFORE BIRTH. CHILDREN ARE BORN WITH THEIR FULL COMPLEMENT OF BRAIN CELLS. THE QUESTION BEFORE US IS WHAT WILL WE DO TO HELP TO DEVELOP THOSE BRAIN CELLS.**

When a child is born the brain cells are not connected. These brain cells called neurons need to be connected. The better job we do making those connections, those synapses, the greater the

opportunity for that child to learn and to develop. By age 3 the brain has formed as many as 1,000 trillion of these synapses...and for some of those connections, if they are not made by age 3 or 4 or 5, they will NEVER be made.

IT IS SAFE TO SAY, WITHOUT RESERVATION, according to the National Research Council, "From the time of conception to the first day of kindergarten, development proceeds at a pace exceeding that of any other stage of life."

The way in which the adult brain functions can be profoundly affected by early experiences.

I love the book the Scientist in the Crib by Alison Gopnik, Andrew Meltzoff and Patricia Kuhl. They point out that babies and children have powerful learning mechanisms that allow them to spontaneously revise, reshape and restructure their knowledge. The authors put it this way, "The human baby's computational system is really a network, held together by language and love, instead of by optic fiber."

Because the brain is sensitive and influenced by events in the outside world we must make certain that each child's brain is strengthened in the most positive and constructive ways, by making certain that children are healthy and given healthy stimulus including preschool.

I am sorry to say that most Americans do not understand this fact but you get it here.

I visited the French preschools as a guest of the French America Foundation back in 1999. What I found there was nothing less than phenomenal. When a Frenchwoman goes to see a doctor because she was pregnant, the doctor notifies the French government to ensure that she begins to receive a stipend to secure adequate nutrition and medical care until the child is born. The mother goes on a paid maternity leave.

When she returns to work, if she does not have other arrangements the French government has support for her to receive care. From three months until the child is 3 years of age, that care is usually

through a day care center or crèche where care is provided on a sliding scale. From the time the child is potty trained until they are entering elementary school, they attend l'école maternelle, a full day program of child development where from 8:30-4:30 children are in a developmental setting that is free to the parent. Wrap around services between 7-8:30 and 4:30-6 can be purchased by parents. Meals are wonderful, healthy, delivered with care in a leisurely setting.

Our nation has invested more on brain research in the last couple of decades, and although still modest the research is overwhelmingly pointing in one direction:

Early childhood education plays a critical role in a child's future success.

- ☒ Rand Report (1998) shows that children who have had the benefit of preschool have
 - ☒ Better academic and social skills,
 - ☒ A reduced likelihood of being retained, dropping out, or becoming juvenile delinquents,
 - ☒ A greater likelihood of attending college,
 - ☒ And avoiding long periods of unemployment, welfare or jail.
- ☒ The University of North Carolina study (1999 the Abecedarian Project) shows high quality in child development programs can still be measured at the end of the second grade and again after age 12. It is associated with positive early learning skills, including a larger vocabulary, better pre-reading and pre-math skills in the early years (Howes, 1999) and much higher IQ and overall achievement in later years.
- ☒ Perry Preschool Project (1962-1965) shows the Return on Investment (ROI) - \$7 for every \$1 invested. A later RAND report in 2007 showed a return closer to \$16 to \$1.
- ☒ The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) reported the Chicago Child Parent Centers (CCPC) Return on Investment was 10-1.
- ☒ National Research Council reported that early education opportunities are necessary if children are going to develop the language and literacy skills necessary to learn to read (Universal Preschool Report).
- ☒ Evaluations of early education programs demonstrate that

- children who participate in such programs:
- ☒ Perform better on reading and mathematics achievement tests,
 - ☒ Are more likely to stay academically near their grade level and make normal academic progress throughout elementary school,
 - ☒ Are less likely to be held back a grade or require special education services in elementary school,
 - ☒ Show greater learning retention, initiative, creativity, and social competency, and
 - ☒ Are more enthusiastic about school and are more likely to have good attendance records
- (Howes, 1999).

Just this month, the PEW Center on the States gave us yet another research study that points out the importance of preschool.

“The rewards of paying now are better known than ever before. Research has demonstrated that supporting healthy early childhood development— from before birth through age 5— produces substantial educational, social and financial benefits for children and their communities.

A new analysis by economist Mark Cohen and criminologists Alex Piquero and Wesley Jennings reports the lesser known pay-later price tag. They

estimate the social costs caused by an array of bad outcomes including child abuse and neglect, high school dropouts, criminal activity, teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse and other health problems. All of these expensive social ills could be significantly diminished through investments in evidence-based early childhood programs.”

The public is with us. They supported Proposition 10 in California, which while it did not get us to Universal Preschool; it did much to expand the preschool options and well as early health and safety measures for children in the first 5 years of life. And when the then Governor and a weak legislature tried to steal the money, the public rejected the money grab resoundingly. I truly believe that people who lack the courage to raise taxes should not be allowed to steal those taxes as this Governor tried to do with Proposition 1D.

The public understands what those in government have overlooked. We have mountains of research that tell us from zero to 5 is where the lines of achievement success or failure are drawn. But if we are to foster the kind of high quality program that our competitor nations have, we must do what they have done and make preschool an overall much more high quality system, preferably available for all day.

I have nothing against the Governor Schwarzenegger's after school program, except that we would not need such a massive program after school if we had Universal Preschool, full day mandatory kindergarten and much more support for health and safety of children under the age of 6.

Meanwhile, I am sick to realize that Governor Schwarzenegger eliminated our Extended Day program, putting hundreds of thousands of kids under the age of 13 into unsafe latchkey environments. Taking away our COLA is unfortunate but putting thousands of children at risk when they are not in school is unconscionable. Now Governor Brown is making that bad decision worse by failing to protect 11 and 12 year olds.

But it gets worse. On October 8 the Governor vetoed \$256 million dollars in Prop 98 funds supporting Cal-works Stage 3 saying he needed to put that money into a rainy day fund. Because the money was from Prop 98, the money was not a strain on the General Fund. It is money that is supposed to go to education and not to a reserve account. This money is designed to keep working families working by providing child-care to children who would otherwise have no care and force their parents back to welfare. This is penny-wise and pound-foolish policy if ever I have seen it. A judge has stepped in with an injunction, but it remains to be seen how long this Stage 3 funding will continue.

Meanwhile, let us contemplate the **FY 2011-12 Conference Committee Proposal**

- ☒ The Conference Committee settled on a compromise which provides an allocation of \$1.8 billion in FY 2011-12 for child

care and development programs.

- ☒ This is an increase over the \$1.6 billion proposed in the Governor's budget that was released in January.
- ☒ There were some modifications to the Governor's proposal and also some new reductions.
- ☒ Most significant of the new reductions is a reduction of up to 10 percent to the Standard Reimbursement Rate which is expected to generate savings of \$109 million.
- ☒ As we all know, the already low SRR has been an ongoing problem for the Child Development Division (CDD) contractors. There hasn't been a cost of living increase since FY 2007-08.
- ☒
- ☒ The Conference Committee also reduced the reimbursement ceilings for license exempt providers from 80 percent to 60 percent of the ceilings for licensed providers resulting in a savings of \$44 million.
- ☒
- ☒ The Governor's budget proposal reduced the level of subsidies for direct service programs except for State Preschool by 34.6 percent, estimating the savings to be \$577.5 million.
- ☒
- ☒ The Conference Committee proposal includes an across the board reduction of 15 percent. This does not include Stage 1 and Stage 2 as they are entitlement programs. This results in a reduction of \$267 million.
- ☒
- ☒ There is a 10 percent across the board increase to the family fee schedule which is expected to save \$12 million. This Governor's proposal was to require families to pay a co-payment
- ☒
- ☒ As you will recall in the Governor's budget proposal, contractors were to be given flexibility in program

administration and subsidy levels to implement the reductions to subsidies. The intent was that that families served would make up the difference between the amount of funding from the state and the actual cost of care.



Stage 3 was restored in the Governor's Budget and there were no changes



The income eligibility limit was reduced from 75 percent of the State Median Income (SMI) to 70 percent SMI for all programs resulting in a reduction of \$30.1 million. The Governor had proposed 60 percent of SMI, excluding preschool which would have generated a reduction of \$79.2 million.



Services for 11 and 12 year olds have been declared not a priority. However, 11 and 12 year olds will have priority for before and after school programs. Exempted are 11 and 12 year olds served during non-traditional hours and those who are disabled, at risk of abuse, or homeless. The expected reduction is \$38.5 million. The Governor's budget eliminated all services for 11 and 12 year olds and would have resulted in a reduction on \$59.3 million.

We must support quality preschool for all. This dreadful year of budget foolishness is not as bad as was first proposed. While First Five is having its reserves swept, the legislature has stepped away from trying to eviscerate it permanently. We can insure that there is adequate teacher training and technical assistance not only on such topics as early literacy and numeracy, but also on insuring there is adequate training for teachers to develop skills in relationship building with young children, and in assisting teachers in the fostering of curiosity, self-direction, conflict resolution, small motor skill development and persistence in learning situations.

We must commit ourselves to a vision of the future that is a high quality future for each and every child. This is what the Pew Study tells us:

That means we in California must commit to early childhood investments because they will provide substantial returns for taxpayers. We must continue the nutritional support during

pregnancy from the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program to prevent unhealthy births. This \$1,000 investment now can save \$10,000 and more from a low birth weight baby.

If we pay now for Nurse-Family Partnership programs to reduce child abuse and neglect for low-income women expecting their first child, we can save \$30,000 later for an abused or neglected child that requires substantial spending on health care and social services like foster care.

If we provide high-quality voluntary pre-kindergarten, it may cost us \$10,000 now but save us \$250,000-\$500,000 in reduced earnings. You see the child who experiences high quality preschool is less likely to drop out of high school.

This last is important. Two generations ago, non-college graduates taught K-12 education. My grandmother and two aunts of mine taught school right out of high school. This was in Kentucky but occurred as late as the 1930's. Gradually we made the national norm that elementary, middle and high school teachers themselves needed more education. We must do so for preschool.

Most of you here know that we must make this work, teaching the littlest among us, much more important. We simply must support our children by improving the support for our teachers in this field and raising the standards for preschool teachers.

In the highest performing states and countries, all teachers, including preschool teachers, feel valued. These teachers report they have adequate resources and support to be effective. The highest performing states and nations have a low turnover of teachers. America is losing a third of its teachers every 5 years. Teacher retention should be of utmost importance. But we do not even have very good data on teacher retention in k-12 education, let alone preschool.

But even as I am speaking of increasing the standards and salary for preschool teachers, I am not talking about teaching 4 year olds the periodic table of the elements. Preschool teachers have important work to do but we must be careful not to start teaching

rigorous academic subject matter to preschoolers. This is a time of wonder and discovery, this is learning at its most joyful and we must focus on social and emotional growth, physical development and cognitive nurturing. One size does not fit all and so we must allow for different models and different approaches, but preschool teachers must be more advanced in their own education in the decades to come.

By the way, the typical French preschool teacher has the same level of training, credentials and pay as a French elementary school teacher. That will take us several years to accomplish so we should begin at once.

The threatened cuts to Head Start will be resisted by the Senate, and, if necessary, vetoed by the President. Nonetheless, and all the more, we must re-engage policymakers of both parties on the importance of early learning.

Research tells us is that 70% of the children who are below grade level in the 4th grade could be identified in Kindergarten. Put somewhat differently, a child of middle income family status who has been to preschool has 4 times the vocabulary beginning the first grade as his counterpart from a working class family that did not send its child to preschool.

(In San Francisco, there are 4000 kindergartners who started school this fall speaking 50 languages. Across California, 50% of kindergartners speak a language other than English at home.)

This should be a wake-up call to greatly strengthen preschool AND greater increase communication and cooperation between preschool and kindergarten. Of course, we should be building more preschools on elementary school campuses. When that is not possible, preschoolers should visit kindergartens long before the first day of kindergarten. Communication between preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers should be increased and joint trainings and staff development like this should be common practice. Your plan is built on that premise.

We must find better ways to not only communicate with parents, but

to create educational opportunities for parents to learn how to support their children educationally but also in terms of health and social services that they may not understand how to access. Your plan includes that.

Teachers need principals and school leaders that are instructional leaders who feel empowered to create a vision and develop strategies for achieving high standards. Principals need to build organizational systems in which everyone at the school site takes ownership. The next big step is to improve our leadership programs for early childhood administrators.

I am sad to report that when the budget of our state was far healthier than it is today, too many in California's political leadership, including governors of both parties, rejected our call for Universal Preschool as if we are out of our minds.

Yes, it will be difficult to do.

Yes, it will be expensive.

Yes, it is necessary.

What are the benefits to society if we provide great care and protection, education and health care prior to age 6?

- Our state would have increased tax revenues, resulting from increased employment and earning by program participants. We know from the OECD that America is far less likely to move the children of working class families into the middle class than 9 nations that have universal preschool.
- In the long run, California would have decreased budget outlays, including reductions in Medicaid, Food Stamps, criminal justice outlays and general assistance (including reduced administrative costs, as well as payments to recipients).
- As a result of our early investment in children, we would experience reduced expenditures for education, health, and other services. (Rand Report, 1998)
- Most of all, it will help each individual child to enter school ready to learn AND it will help our society.
- Even in the midst of our last terrible budget crisis, leading California newspapers like the Sacramento Bee were calling for Universal Preschool saying, "It deserves serious attention

because the potential for giving young children a better start in life is so great. “

Why Now?

- ☒ Because of societal changes (welfare reform), there is a great need for additional child care for working parents,
- ☒ Because the growing racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity of our children suggests a greater need to insure all children enter school ready to learn,
- ☒ Because California lags behind most other states in student educational achievement and academic success,
- ☒ Because the social and emotional development of our children is as important as their linguistic and cognitive development,
- ☒ And because investment in the education of young children is essential if California is to regain its national role as an educational leader.

Ironically, I have been talking about making investments in our children based on sound, well-documented research, the kind of research that previous Presidents, Congresses, Governors and Legislatures did not have when they invested in land grant colleges, compulsory public education, the GI Bill of Rights, and college loans. They did what was right was a matter of instinct. They followed their democratic (small d) values whether they were Democrats or Republicans. Now it is time to do what is right for the next generation, yes, because research tells us it is the right thing to do.

Most of all, we should do this because to send a message to our children that we love them enough to invest in them, and that as the heirs of Lincoln, Roosevelt, Eisenhower and Kennedy, we are willing to do work that is hard and expensive, because it is the right thing to do.

What are other states/countries doing? Since 1991-92, state spending (nationally) on prekindergarten initiatives has expanded substantially. The number of children participating (nationally) in state-funded prekindergarten programs has increased with a total of 42 states now investing in state prekindergarten initiatives. Georgia, which has the second highest level of state prekindergarten spending, was the first state to invest sufficient funds to make

prekindergarten available to all children whose families want them to participate. But other states, including New York, Oklahoma, Florida and Massachusetts are on the road to universal preschool.

Locally, right here in California, some counties like Contra Costa, San Mateo and Santa Clara have made a commitment to Universal Preschool. Now Alameda County is joining the ranks of the counties committed to Universal Preschool.

Nonetheless, CA is near the bottom among states in terms of the percentage of kids in publicly funded preschool programs.

In France:

- Preschool is universal and free for all children starting at age 3,
- 99% of three-to five-year olds are currently enrolled,
- Teachers are trained, hired and paid for by national government,
- Teacher training is equivalent to a Master's degree,
- Additional staff is hired and paid for by municipalities,
- Municipalities pay for facilities.
- In Israel:
- Many two-year-olds and almost all three and four-year-olds attend some kind of preschool.
- Local authorities sponsor most programs.

And, of course, Italy has an amazing and comprehensive preschool system, renowned around the globe.

My goals for children in California have not changed much since our task force report in 1997, but my impatience is growing. I am proud to have been an honorary co-chair of Proposition 10. I am supported Rob Reiner's initiative because too many people in the legislature were simply ignoring children prior to the age of 6. That is why I applauded the state's Master Plan for Education in 2002, which called for Universal Preschool. Sadly, it was never adopted. That is why I was pleased that the Governor Schwarzenegger Committee on Education Excellence called for statewide preschool for all 3- to 4-year olds in poverty. Sadly, he shelved the report as the budget got tight and even tried to steal First Five money.

And don't look now. Governor Schwarzenegger despite the 2-1 rejection of his attempted theft of First Five money in May 2009, supported a Senator's effort to go after these funds again. My message to the Governor and the Legislature was, if you do not have the courage to raise taxes, then do not try to steal those taxes when others have the courage to do so. This legislature has rejected tobacco taxes on 16 occasions. How cowardly that they would then try to poach off of First Five. It is an outrage and a foolish waste of taxpayer money to put this on the ballot for a second time in a year, when it was defeated by such a huge margin the first time.

Fortunately we defeated that bill in committee. We have a new governor who was threatening to go after First Five and the youngest children. He did back away from the most draconian cuts because he would have had to go to the voters. Rob Reiner would have gone to the mat had Jerry Brown not reduced his demands on First Five. I spoke to Rob and signed on to oppose the more dramatic cuts. In the end Jerry Brown reduced the worst cuts. The current cuts are bad but they are one time.

But for heavens sake, how many more research studies and reports do we need before we put some money where our mouths are. For me, the major elements remain the same. Every dollar invested in the early years of life is just that, an investment.

Of course children should have pre-natal care. It is especially hypocritical for anyone calling himself or herself "pro-life" who does not believe in prenatal care for mother and child. Otherwise you are merely pro-conception, and life is downhill after that.

Of course, new mothers and fathers should have, not only maternity and paternity leave with a promise of employment upon return, but the United States and/or the California government should make the leave a paid leave, as most of our European and first world counterpart countries do. According to the *Economist*, "At least 145 countries provide paid sick leave. America allows only unpaid absence for serious family illness. America's public spending on family support is low by OECD standards." In fact we are one of only

four nations on earth that do not offer a paid maternity leave. The others: Swaziland, Papua New Guinea and Liberia.

Of course, all children, of all income levels, in all communities should have an equal opportunity to receive the necessary preparation to be ready to learn in the primary grades. And while I think it should be a voluntary program, it should be universally available and of the highest quality. America and California should work to develop developmental systems from age 18 months and we simply must focus on high standards, and, just like in Europe, it will use both public and private providers if they achieve the high standards. This system will provide a stimulating environment, positive learning experiences and an emphasis on social and emotional development as well as linguistic and cognitive development. Lastly, California must put this fully in place within a decade.

Of course, Kindergarten should be closely aligned with preschool. In fact, kindergarten should be mandatory and full day. And there should be more elementary schools with preschools on site.

Today in America, most low-wage workers never move into the middle class. According to a study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the economies of France, Italy, Britain, Germany, Denmark, Finland and Sweden provide more mobility for low-wage workers than the United States. Again from the *Economist*, "Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland and Hungary provide up to three years of paid leave for mothers. Germany has introduced a "parent's salary" of Elterngeld, to encourage mothers to stay at home....Other countries put more emphasis on preschool education. New Zealand and the Nordic countries are particularly keen on getting women back to work and children into kindergartens. Britain, German, Japan, Switzerland and above all, the Netherlands are keen on mothers working part-time."

Our only hope for social competence and for economic success and for the prevalence of democratic values is to improve the education of our children--all of our children. And we must begin thinking this way soon.

Neil Postman wrote, “Children are the message we send to a time we will never see.” Our ill-schooled forbears, seemed to understand this. They were generous and visionary with the future.

I sincerely hope that our generation will begin to plan for a future that Thomas Friedman describes when he says, “In the flat world the frontiers of knowledge get pushed out farther and farther, faster and faster.... And America either needs to be training that brainpower itself or importing it from somewhere else—or ideally both—if it wants to dominate the twenty-first century the way it dominated the twentieth—and that simply is not happening.”

I hope you will make it happen here.

I have lived long enough now to conclude with this observation: There is nothing wrong with our children. I am, however, worried about some of the grownups.

We are at a crossroads in America where people with a straight face are proposing tax cuts in lieu of preschools, rebuilding Iraqi public schools when many American schools are in shambles, cutting support for teachers in classrooms while complaining about how many police we need on the street, shifting resources from voter approved tax initiatives to fund a bloated, incompetent prison system.

I am not talking rocket science here.

I am talking common sense.

Educate them or incarcerate them.

Love them or they will not love our nation and its values.

The founders of this country and great leaders for more than 200 years knew that we must be about “securing these blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity”.

When thinking about our posterity it seems self evident to me that Universal preschool should be as obvious as saving Yosemite or digging the Panama Canal or building the Golden Gate Bridge or the supporting the Manhattan Project or the Marshall Plan or going to the moon....

Some believe it to be more important than any single thing our country could embark upon at this moment.

Some believe it is the next big idea.

Count me in as one of those who believes.

Our last Governor said he thought the idea of Universal Preschool was “fantastic” but he did not support an initiative that identified a means to pay for it. He did not want to raise taxes. But he will try to steal those taxes from others who have the courage to go to the voters to raise such taxes.

Subsequently he said a sexy, high-speed rail was important for California and he put it on the ballot without identifying a means to pay for it other than the general fund of California. Now he wants an expensive water system but he has not identified a means to pay for it. I think Universal preschool is more important than either of those expenditures that we could make the people using the rail or the water pay for.

In the end the budget of a state or a nation is a statement of values.

I say our nation’s values used to be to put children first and those should be our values again.

I close with these words from Dwight David Eisenhower said in 1953 but just as true today:

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.

This world in arms is not spending money alone.

It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children...

This is one of those times in the affairs of nations when the gravest choices must be made, if there is to be a turning toward a just and lasting peace.”

Eisenhower was correct. This is a time when grave choices must be made and we must demand that our leaders in Sacramento and in Washington make the hard choice for a just and lasting peace.

General Eisenhower would be proud of Contra Costa County. I am proud of Contra Costa county. Thank you for all you are doing to provide for the common defense, for promoting the general welfare and securing the blessings of liberty for ourselves and for our posterity by focusing on our posterity when they are at their most important developmental stage. I am certain that the founders of this nation would salute you for taking the next big step in creating a wonderful country in this county.