

# Universal Preschool in Salinas Campaign Update Spring 2018



Long-term studies show that access to a high quality preschool can have life-long benefits. Children that attend preschool are more likely to graduate from high school and even earn more over their lifetime!

Investing in quality early care and learning programs pays off – with every \$1 invested giving a \$13 return! Not only will this benefit children and their families, but our entire community with:

- Increased economic growth with a better prepared workforce
- Lower costs of public benefits and education supports later in life
- Reduction of violent crimes, which can improve property values

The benefits of high-quality universal preschool have been demonstrated at scale in recent independent evaluations. Analyses from other cities and states show the benefits significantly outweigh the costs.

In addition, universal access can remove barriers for children experiencing the greatest challenges – including homeless children and children with special needs.

Salinas residents have voiced that investing in early care and education is a top priority for our community. The current preschool system in Salinas is fragmented and unfair. There are not enough spaces available for children of working families, and many of the current programs have restrictive income and other requirements. A universal program – available to ALL children regardless of neighborhood or social class – will be fairer and provide higher quality early learning opportunities for everyone. Our plan will also allow for more parental choice, recognizing that there is no one-size-fits-all program.

Our parent-led local action team is working with early childhood leaders, preschools, county officials, city staff, business leaders and school districts, to develop a plan to achieve our ambitious goal of universal preschool! **Join us!**

<sup>1</sup> KidsData.org (Accessed February, 2018)  
<sup>2</sup> First 5 Monterey County (2015)

## BRIGHT BEGINNINGS SALINAS

### Our Vision

Every child will have what they need to reach their maximum potential. As a right, they will have access, without restrictions to quality preschool opportunities.

Preschool for all will support children's academic success and ultimately improve the quality of life for all in Salinas.

### Today

Only 51% of 3-5 year olds in the City of Salinas are enrolled in preschool or kindergarten<sup>1</sup>

### By Fall 2021

There will be a top quality early learning opportunity for at least 24 hours per week, available to every 3-5 year old in the City of Salinas

### By Fall 2023

60% of children entering kindergarten will be healthy, thriving and fully ready to succeed in school and life (currently only 28% of children are fully prepared for kindergarten)<sup>2</sup>



## PARENTS & CHILDREN FACE A CHILDCARE CRISIS IN SALINAS

One of the most pressing issues affecting children and families in Salinas is the lack of options for affordable, high quality early care and education. Many working parents cannot afford the type of care they prefer, and state and federal early care programs are only available to a limited number of families. All children have the right to be with caregivers that have the skills and knowledge to support their optimal learning and development. The current system is inadequate and unfair.

### School Readiness Gaps

Today only 1 in 4 children have the type of supportive early life experiences they need to be well prepared for success when they enter kindergarten.<sup>3</sup> Children in Salinas are less well prepared than children in other parts of the county.<sup>4</sup>

### Quality Gaps

Every child's learning needs to be supported by positive, attentive caregivers – whether at home with a parent or in an early learning center. Too many children attend unlicensed, informal care centers where basic quality standards are not being met. In fact, the more time a child spends in unlicensed care, the less likely they are to be well prepared for school.

### Equity Gaps

The current system is unfair and has created huge disparities among children in our community. Universal Preschool can help close the gap for children facing the largest barriers, while at the same time benefit children that are already better off.

In Salinas, a universal program will be especially important to ensure children in homeless families, children with special needs, children whose parents are immigrants or in low wage, seasonal or unstable employment, and children who are learning multiple languages, will have access to the best start in life.<sup>5,6</sup>

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

### Attend a campaign meeting

Campaign meetings are held the first Monday of the month at Salinas City Hall – Community Meeting room 1:00 -2:30 pm. Lunch, interpretation, and childcare are provided. **Follow us: @Preschool4All**

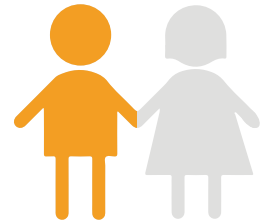
### Vote and advocate for increased funding

Ask candidates for local office about their position on support for public health and education generally, and early care and education specifically. Write to your elected officials (school boards, Salinas Mayor, City Council Members) calling for action. We are calling for cannabis tax revenues to be used to fund universal preschool, and are also exploring other funding options.

### Work with your school

Some elementary, middle, and high schools have space, teaching and administrative capacities that can be mobilized to support our youngest learners before they enter school – and many schools are already taking significant steps to better support children and families. Expanding Transitional Kindergarten (TK) with high quality, age appropriate support to four year olds, is one proven way for districts to support more children. Supporting early learning pays off in the long run by lowering the need for remedial education and special supports.

1 out of 2  
children  
are missing out



### Talk to your employer

Many workplaces provide onsite high quality early-care options, which is good for the bottom line and good for working parents. Businesses can get support and be recognized as a Family Friendly Employer by visiting: **[brightbeginningsmc.org](http://brightbeginningsmc.org)**

### Talk to your faith leader

Is your place of worship being used to maximum capacity to support local families? Could additional quality learning opportunities be provided on your church, mosque or temple grounds on days or at times it is not in use? Opening a preschool can be an excellent revenue source and a way to engage and support your community!

For more information please contact: Maria Carmen Parra [maria@BrightBeginningsMC.org](mailto:maria@BrightBeginningsMC.org).

<sup>3</sup> First 5 Monterey County (2015)

<sup>4</sup> Analysis of First Monterey County (2015) data by Bright Beginnings (2018)

<sup>5</sup> Source: Chaudry, Morrissey, Weiland and Yoshikawa (2017)

<sup>6</sup> Source: Marcelli and Pastor (undated)