

## Marin Quality Counts...Building a Strong Future

As policymakers, you understand that it's critical for all children to have the best possible start in their education and their lives. Today's young children are tomorrow's workforce, leaders and community members. For this reason, it's vital that we make early learning a priority—investing in high quality early learning is investing in a stronger future.

Marin Quality Counts is a collaborative initiative promoting excellence in early care and education for programs, providers and families. Our work includes the Marin County Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) , which provides supports to the early care and education field for achievement of this goal. Marin Quality Counts and is funded through California Department of Education and CA First 5. Local partners include: Marin County Office of Education, Marin Child Care Council, First 5 Marin, Marin County Child Care Commission and the College of Marin.

Although all children benefit from high quality early learning, children at-risk have the most to gain because they start off school behind their more advantaged peers. High quality early learning, such as preschool, improves school readiness and raises performance on academic achievement in the early grades.

### Other long-term benefits of high quality early learning are significant and include:

- Increased employment, income and tax contribution levels
- Decreased public health care, welfare and child care expenses
- Reduced special education costs
- Increased high school graduation and college attendance rates
- Reduced crime rates over time

*Economists have found that high-quality early learning offers one of the highest returns of any public investment...*

## The Need for High Quality Early Learning in Marin County

Although Marin County ranks high among other California counties on measures of child wellbeing, up to 60% fewer children who are economically disadvantaged or racially diverse meet the state targets in math and English. The cost of child care and limited subsidized programs, can easily strain a family's budget and impact the quality of their life. Approximately 35% of three and four year olds *do not* attend preschool (Children Now, 2015) and one in three Marin children live in families who are unable to meet their basic needs including childcare due to insufficient income. Currently there are approximately 900 children needing subsidized support on the county-wide waitlist. In addition, due to low wages, Marin early care and education programs have difficulty hiring and retaining highly qualified teachers and caregivers (Marin County Child Care Commission, 2014).

The **good news** is that Marin Quality Counts is committed to changing these statistics. Through improvement and accessibility of high quality learning programs, Marin children are being set on trajectories for success in school and beyond.