



2024

# Annual Impact Report



## A Note From Our Executive Director

As the San Francisco Department of Early Childhood embarks on another year, we continue to lead the nation in delivering transformative early childhood services.

This year, we are celebrating a remarkable milestone: **a major rebound in kindergarten readiness for children entering school in San Francisco.** Readiness scores are now 68% overall, the highest they've been in over a decade. We see improvements across all racial/ethnic groups and subgroups. As we continue to navigate national post-pandemic challenges, this progress reflects the impact of our collective investments in early education access, early educator compensation, social and emotional learning, and individualized early childhood programs.

We are thrilled to have more families participating in locally funded early care and education programs, family resource centers, and developmental screenings for the third straight year in a row. New initiatives like the Sparkler mobile app give families tools to help support their children's development, while early educator wages have increased by as much as 47%, ensuring the vital early education workforce is recognized and supported.

Together, we are creating a foundation where every child in San Francisco can thrive. Thank you for your partnership in this critical work as we build on these successes and embrace the opportunities ahead.

With gratitude,

**Ingrid Mezquita**

*Executive Director of the San Francisco Department of Early Childhood*

# In FY 23-24 DEC invested...



**\$124.2M**

in early learning tuition



**\$44.3M**

in workforce compensation



**\$22.7M**

in Family Resource Centers



**\$16.9M**

in new child care facilities



**\$11.1M**

in professional development and training

# Our Impact by the Numbers

**10%**

increase in overall kindergarten readiness since 2021



**7,882**

children received FREE child care through Early Learning For All



**34%**

more children eligible for early learning financial support



**30**

child care sites added to the Early Learning For All network



**16**

new early learning facility developments creating space for 265 more children



**3,007**

educators received higher compensation, with increased wages as much as 49%, through the Workforce Compensation Initiative



**5,706**

children screened for developmental delays or special needs, a 23% increase from last year



**11,254**

children and families participated in parenting classes, playgroups, events, and other activities at Family Resource Centers

# Our Impact on Kindergarten Readiness

Since the Department of Early Childhood launched, children are entering kindergarten significantly better prepared to succeed.



This is an exciting moment. Children are more likely to do well in kindergarten when they start school with the foundational skills they'll need to succeed. But kindergarten readiness doesn't stop there. It continues to benefit students all the way through high school graduation.

10%

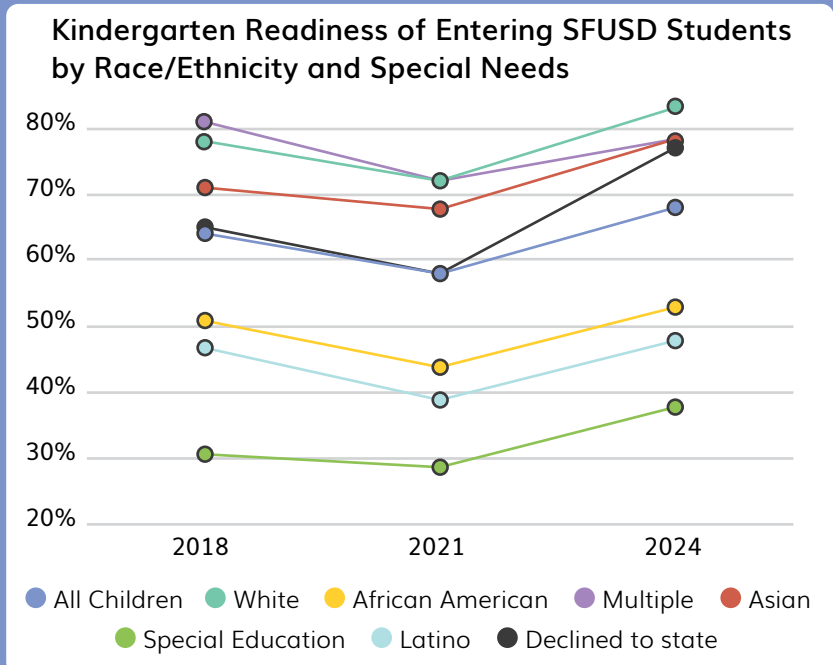
overall increase in kindergarten readiness from 2021 to 2024

9%

increase in readiness among African American and Latino children

San Francisco is one of the only major cities in the country where kindergarten readiness data shows gains, and we are excited that the needle is moving quickly.

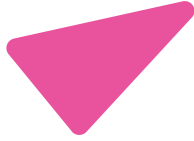
Kindergarten readiness now exceeds pre-pandemic levels in nearly all demographics. These increases will have lasting impacts on the success of San Francisco's children.




## A Race Equity Focus

Many factors contribute to children’s readiness for kindergarten, among them race, gender, home language, and family environment. Achieving equitable outcomes for all children requires intentional effort and dedication to race equity.

These gains in kindergarten readiness across all student populations reflect our ongoing commitment to dismantling barriers and creating an education system that works for everyone.



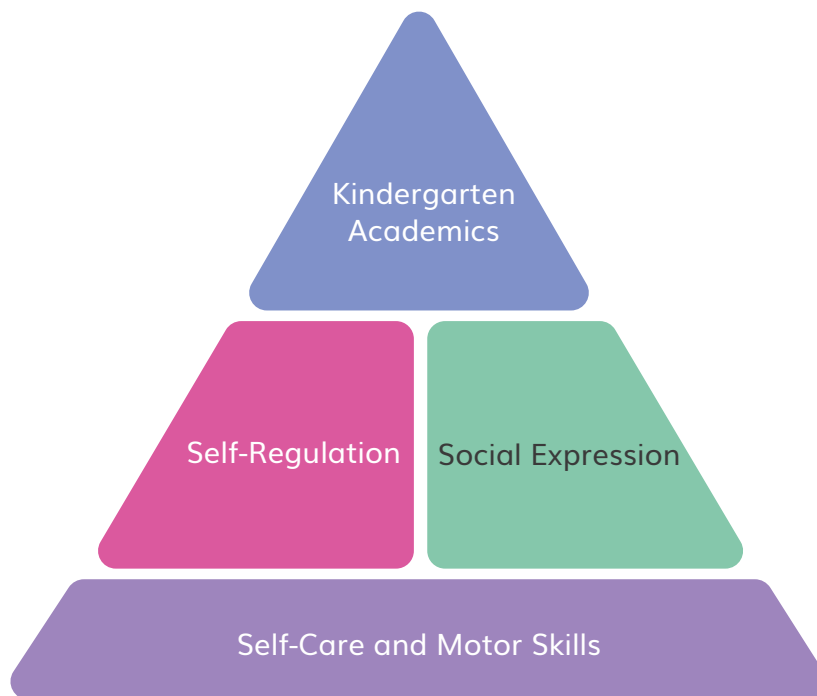
**DEC is deeply committed to ensuring that every child, regardless of background, has access to the resources and support they need to thrive.**



## What is Kindergarten Readiness?

Kindergarten readiness tells us if a child has the skills they need to do well in kindergarten. During the first six weeks of each new school year, every incoming SFUSD kindergartener is assessed on key literacy skills, social-emotional learning, wellness, and early math skills.

By examining all these areas, we create a snapshot of each child’s readiness for the requirements of kindergarten.



Graphic adapted from Applied Survey Research

# Why Increases In Kindergarten Readiness Matter

Getting children ready for kindergarten is like laying the first stone on a path to a bright future. Research shows that how prepared a child is for kindergarten can significantly impact how well they do in important outcomes including behavior, attendance, and academic performance, from kindergarten through 12th grade.\*

Children who start kindergarten ready are more likely to succeed, while those who start behind often struggle to catch up. By investing in our youngest learners right from the start, we can create a positive, lasting change for our children and our city.

**Being fully ready for kindergarten makes a big difference in later grades.\***

\*Learn more in the full report, "Examining the K-12 Journey through San Francisco Unified School District." <https://sfdec.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/SFUSD-Longitudinal-Study-Report-FINAL-1.pdf>

Demonstrate higher scores in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math standardized tests

Are less likely to be suspended

Are more likely to graduate high school on time

# How DEC Is Impacting Kindergarten Readiness

What sets San Francisco apart? Since 2022, DEC has developed initiatives that focus on the factors proven to contribute to kindergarten readiness. We are creating a unique "system of care" that strategically supports families and young children:



Financial support for families to help make high-quality early care and education accessible to all SF residents.



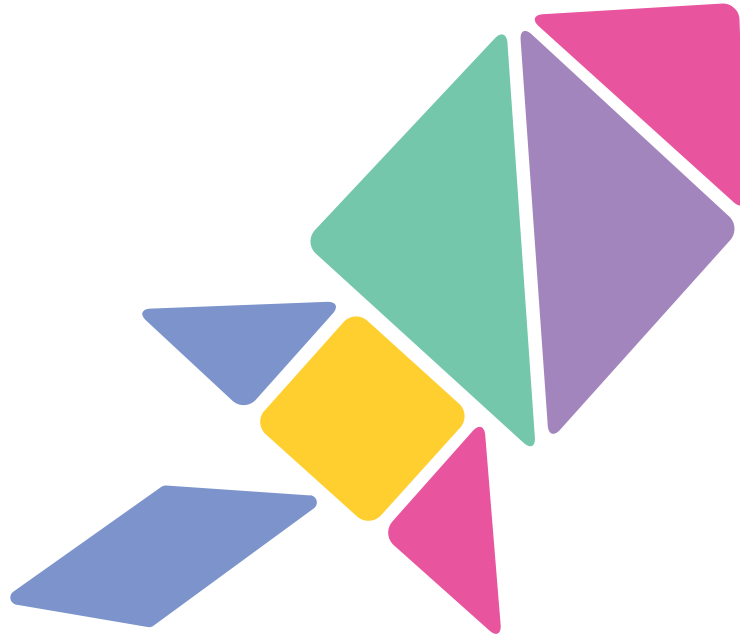
Child health screenings and consultations to ensure kids are healthy and ready to learn.



Early educator compensation, professional development, and quality supports that value our teaching workforce and equip them to deliver high-quality early learning experiences for children.



Family Resource Centers that connect families to vital support and resources.



**This all-hands-on-deck approach  
makes San Francisco a standout  
city for kindergarten readiness.**

**We're not just measuring  
readiness—we're making it happen!**



# Our Strategies

Over the past year, DEC has deepened its investments and expanded initiatives to support young children and the adults who care for them. By taking a multi-generational approach, we continue to strengthen families and amplify our impact across the community.

Explore DEC's progress and the positive outcomes of our initiatives and investments in the following pages.

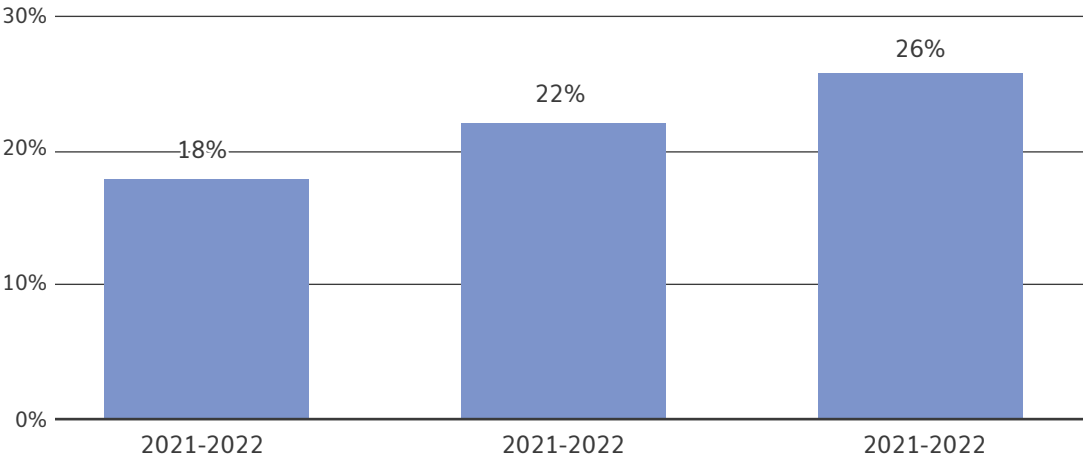
# Historic Expansion to Early Learning Access & Participation

San Francisco’s child and family landscape has transformed remarkably in recent years. Families in San Francisco are increasingly prioritizing early learning, enrolling in City-funded programs more than ever before. Enrollment has increased by 8% in 3 years, despite an overall decrease in the number of young children in the City. In fact, San Francisco continues to lead the state in preschool enrollment by a wide margin!

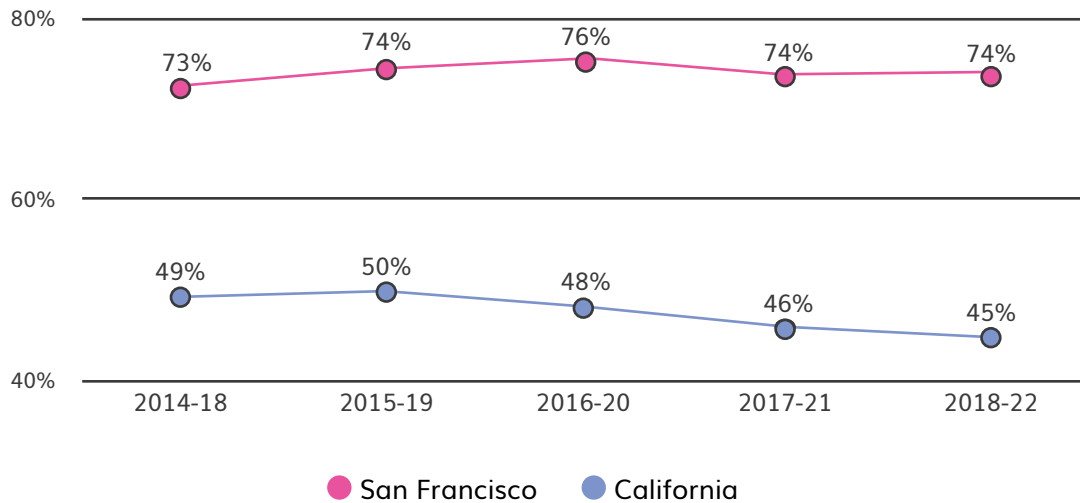
Better yet, San Francisco has also seen a dramatic increase in the number of infants and toddlers enrolled in child care. This is a result of DEC’s strategic approach to supporting children and families. San Francisco is one of the only cities in the country that uses local funding to help families pay for early care for infants and toddlers, rather than only offering financial support for preschool. From birth to five years old, families in San Francisco can receive free or low-cost early learning.



Percentage of children ages 0-5 enrolled in City-funded ECE programs



## Percentage of 3-and-4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool in San Francisco Compared to California

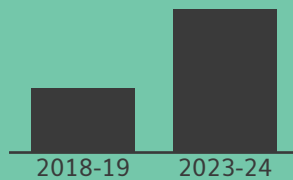


## Data Highlights

**7,882**

Children received FREE early learning

From 2018 to 2024, the number of infants enrolled increased by 87%



18% increase in toddler enrollment in the past year

**6,501**

More children are now eligible for subsidized child care thanks to new expanded eligibility

Since 2018, the waitlist has decreased 73%, even as we continue to expand eligibility!



# Targeted Facilities Expansion to Close Opportunity Gaps

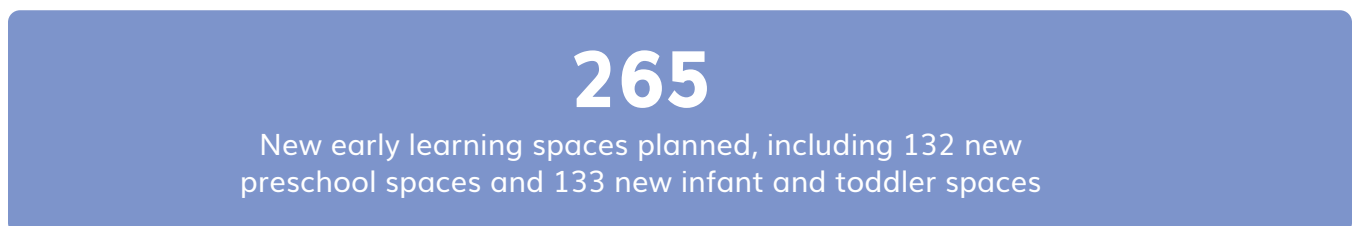
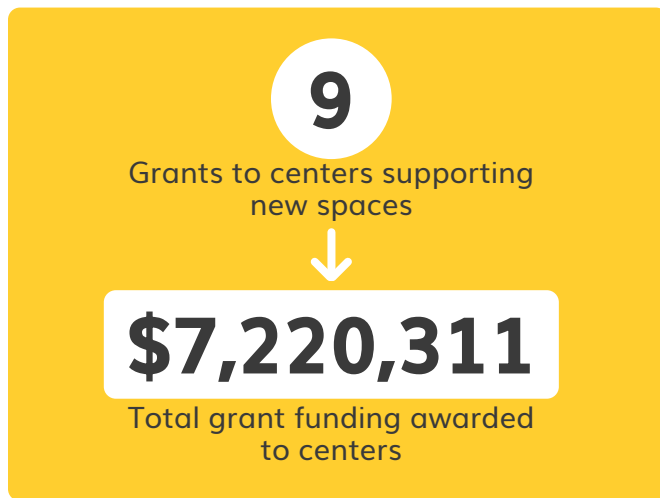
For years, the Child Care Planning and Advisory Council (CPAC) needs assessment has identified seven neighborhoods as the highest priority for increasing the number of early learning spaces. These are the areas where the most families live, yet there hasn't been enough child care and preschool spaces in these neighborhoods to meet families' needs.

In alignment with our strategic plan goals and department values of racial equity and universal access, DEC has been investing aggressively to expand capacity in these priority neighborhoods: Mission, Excelsior, Bayview, Visitacion Valley, Tenderloin, Sunset/Parkside, and Potrero Hill.

These investments have yielded amazing results! We've successfully met 100% of preschool capacity needs in these family-rich communities, and the gaps in infant-toddler capacity are rapidly closing.



## Data Highlights



# Grew Workforce Compensation & Quality Investments

Experience and education both help educators be effective in the classroom. That's why DEC invests in an array of supports for the early childhood workforce. We offer professional development, coaching, and training to support continuing education and help educators get advanced degrees in the field.

As educators' qualifications rise, so do their earnings, thanks to our Workforce Compensation Initiative. Educators at City-funded early learning programs are able to receive significant compensation increases. By valuing their expertise, we are elevating the caliber of educators in the field, attracting more talented individuals to this vital work, and ensuring that those already working in early learning are able to stay in the field. When educators thrive, children thrive, which is what San Francisco's families deserve!



"[The Workforce Compensation Initiative] helps people become interested in these jobs, learn more about the work, get more excited about it, and actually see how wonderful it is to be an early educator. This is what has helped me stay in the field. Now I can continue to do what I want to do."

– Adam Batista, Infant/Toddler Teacher, Compass Family Services

Learn more about how the Workforce Compensation Initiative is making a difference!



[www.sfdec.org/wci](http://www.sfdec.org/wci)



## Data Highlights

**691**

more early educators and administrators received workforce compensation enhancements than last year

**\$3.7M**

awarded to 849 participants to reimburse them for permits, continuing education units, and degrees through the Stipend for Early Educator Professional Development (SEEPD)

**1,211**

early educators working in the highest need centers saw their salaries increase by up to 47%

**1,705**

educators received a stipend award that increased their average annual wage by \$12,730

### Professional Development, Coaching, and Trainings

**127** sessions

**1,000+** hours

**2,270** participants

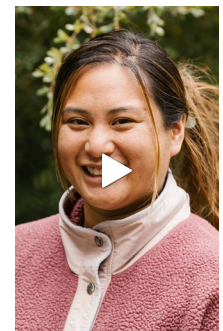
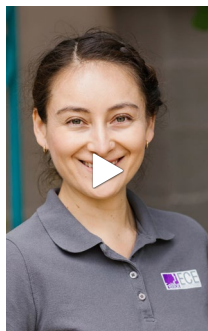
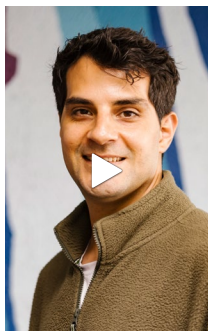


"[The Workforce Compensation Initiative] allows me to improve my professional knowledge and serve our children with better quality."

– Judy Chu, Teacher's Assistant Float, Felton Early Child Center



Meet some of San Francisco's amazing educators



# Reaching More Families: Family Resource Centers

DEC partners with a network of 26 Family Resource Centers across San Francisco to provide families with free, trusted support and resources. These welcoming hubs help parents strengthen their skills, access essential services, and build community connections. With programs that promote confidence, reduce stress, and support healthy child development, Family Resource Centers empower parents to give their children the best possible start in life.

In 2023-2024, Family Resource Centers continued to increase the number of children and parents/ caregivers served, reaching 2,038 children and 7,930 parents and caregivers.

Family Resource Centers continued to offer diverse events and activities to meet a range of family needs and interests. Most importantly, data shows that participation in Family Resource Center programs can have a meaningful impact on family well-being.



## Case Management Outcomes

In FY2023-24, 36% of families receiving first-time case management support to achieve parenting goals had risks in one or more key areas impacting child and family well-being. Of the families whose case management support came to a close, only 12% of them still had these risks!

This shows the impact case management has for families who most need support!

## Parent Education Outcomes

In FY2023-24, 864 parents or caregivers participated in the curriculum-based parent education class series to strengthen their caregiving practices. The results?

Of the 265 parents who had risks for abuse and neglect when they began participating in the series:

**78%** improved their scores and fell below the risk threshold by the end of the program—showing how education and support make a lasting difference!

# Data Highlights





# Expanded Universal Developmental Screenings

All children deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential. Identifying children with special needs is essential to ensuring they get the support they need to thrive. Developmental screenings are a critical tool for detecting potential delays early, when intervention can have the greatest impact.

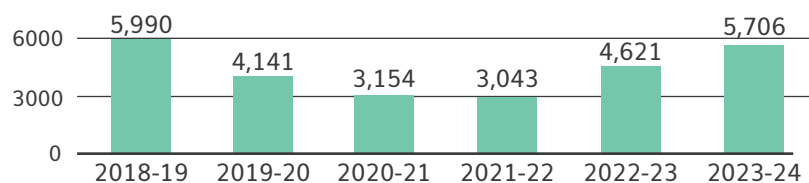
Developmental screening rates dropped drastically during the pandemic. Since then, DEC has expanded access to screenings through traditional screening partners, including early learning programs, family resource centers, and health care providers. We have also invested in innovative new technology tools like the Sparkler app, which allows families to access screenings through their phones or computers.

The great news? Screening rates have rebounded. In 2023-2024, 23% more children received developmental screenings than last year, a return to pre-pandemic levels! Expanding access to screenings will continue to make early intervention and special education support more available to the children that need it.



Developmental screenings are trending up!

Total Number of Children Screened for Special Needs by Year



## Data Highlights

**5,706**

children were screened for developmental delays or special needs

**1,975**

children screened with the innovative app Sparkler, a 410% increase

**23%**

more screenings than last year

# Invested More in Our City's Youngest Children Than Ever Before

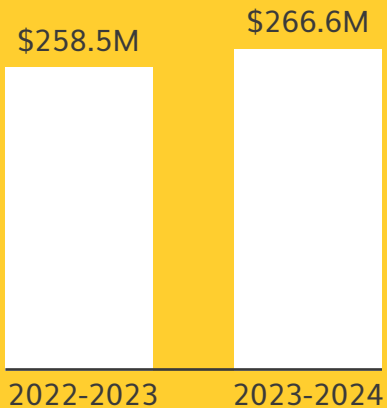
This year, DEC put more money into the hands of those who care for our City's youngest residents than ever before. And our investments are not only historic, they are groundbreaking. San Francisco is investing more per capita in children 0-5 than any other municipality in the country!

In FY23-24, DEC invested \$266 million in grantmaking to nonprofit organizations and intercity department programs including educator compensation and professional development, early intervention, early childhood quality improvement system, Family Resource Centers, the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Initiative, and field capacity building.

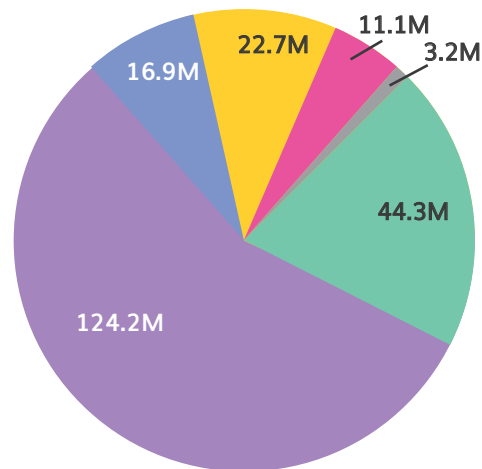
This comprehensive investment in an early childhood system of care ensures that not only do children in San Francisco have access to affordable, high quality early care and education, they and the adults who care for them have what they need to thrive during those early years. This puts them on the path to be ready for success in kindergarten—and far beyond!



DEC is investing more than ever before.



2023–2024 Program Investments



- Workforce Compensation
- Early Learning Tuition
- New Child Care Facilities
- Family Resource Centers
- Professional Development and Training
- Cross City Department Programs



San Francisco Department of

# Early Childhood

[www.sfdec.org](http://www.sfdec.org)