

## **Enrollment Forward: Stanislaus County Office of Education**

Veronica Garcia: Hello. My name is Veronica Garcia. I work with Stanislaus County Office of Education, Child and Family Services. I'm a director of planning and program development and have had the honor to work in the Head Start program for over 23 years.

With that said, I want to make sure that today, I focus on the impacts of our early childhood education shortage and ensure that you all know some of the innovative practices that we have tried to provide here at Stanislaus County's Office of Education and some of our successes.

Possible impacts of shortage, obviously, is a wait list of children. If we don't have staff, we don't have staff to open the classrooms, and that's not something we want. Maybe not enough substitutes, and teachers can't attend all the great training we offer. And then of course, staff wellness is one of our priorities, and we don't want staff feeling obligated to come to work and not feeling well.

One of the newest events and some of our successes in recruiting staff: We had a local career fair focused just on recruitment of the early childhood education field. And we created, also, an entry-level position. It was a substitute position as a Head Start assistant so we could get folks into our classrooms and have them fall in love, just like we all did and stay with us. And then when permanent positions become available or just stay as a substitute teacher, if that is what they chose to and works for them. We can always use substitutes and that extra hand.

Another innovative practice has been dual enrollment at high schools. We had a new partnership with UC Merced Extension programs. Recruiting them early and providing a career path is what has made this a success. Michael will be sharing a bit more on that later on. Also, expanding our partnerships with adult schools and colleges to ensure that they know we have a need, and there are opportunities in the early childhood education field. We have also created some flyers with specific contact information for those looking for jobs in the early childhood education field. A personal connection is always best. With that flyer, it has all the directors' information. They can contact them directly and get the job openings and learn how to apply.

Presentations at the high schools and college classes – we have had success in explaining the career pathway in early childhood education and obviously sharing all the current openings that they may qualify for already. Talking to the college counselors and even the county workforce development programs so they understand our programs, our workforce needs, and guide students towards the early childhood education field.

We also want our voices heard. We understand that colleges have many different divisions, and we want to be sure that we are part of their college advisory committees, so they understand the need. And one of those needs is obviously more infant-toddler courses for early Head Start programs and our young children.

Parent opportunities – this is such a highlight in our programs. Approximately 30% of current staff are past Head Start parents. We created something a few years ago called Parent to Teacher Program, where there are college courses in a cohort, where they go through the whole program together. There are 12 units, and we get them the 12 units needed to get their California Commission on Teacher Credentialing Associate Teacher Permit. And then with that, if they are not ready to take those courses, we offer some ESL courses that is pre-Parent to Teacher Program. We offer both in-person and online courses.

We also have had success in recruiting staff by providing the Child Development Associate certificate, the CDA, in Spanish and English for parents and then also for new family child care home providers, many of whom are past parents. We also have opportunities in our Family Development Credential cohort for parents and family service staff. And, again, many of whom are former parents. A lot of Head Start parent opportunities in our program.

Our outcomes, I'm very happy to say, are 35% of the parents or our participants are already working. Some have continued their education and are enrolled in college courses. They were sometimes first-time college students and decided to further their education and continue. Finishing their volunteer hours to apply for a permit. We require, here in California, 150 hours of experience. Some of them still have to finish their volunteer hours. And then some are still in the process of applying for their permits for various reasons.

Lastly, we have to sell a career pathway in the early childhood education field, letting them know there are opportunities once you become Head Start employees, getting them from high school level, our dual enrollment program as mentioned before – Michael will talk a little bit more about that in a second. But with that, also the early childhood education cohorts. Once you become a Head Start staff member, you can get into our AA degree tuition and book reimbursement or, a cohort, a BA degree tuition and book reimbursement, or a cohort.

And then also we provide professional development and infant-toddler units, administration, supervision units, through the colleges to get more units to advance in that California Commission on Teacher Credentialing permit matrix. Where if you go into some of these positions, there's always room for professional growth and improvement in our field.

With that said, I will turn it over to Michael from UC Merced Extension to share more about the dual enrollment pathway for high schoolers and adult learners.

Michael Pierick: Thanks, Veronica. Michael Pierick, UC Merced Extension, and we're excited to be a partner with Stanislaus County Office of Education and other local high schools and adult programs where we offer 12 units. They're four courses, three units each. They're aligned to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing Associate Teacher Permit for Child Development. And with these courses, our focus is to bring the college or higher education atmosphere to the workers, the workforce, the parents, the students that are enrolled at these high schools, adult programs, and county office of eds to make sure that they have access and

equity within these courseworks to be eligible for the workforce in the early childhood education field.

With that, we offer online asynchronous evening courses that are also tapped into the instructors that each one of these agencies employ and provide to these students. We also offer English and Spanish. Just alone in Stanislaus County, we have high school students and adult learners that are just over 60 to 75 that are currently taking these courses this year that would be eligible for employment. And some other sites that are doing accelerated learning and opportunities to turn students or adult learners into qualified employees in our communities within just 16 weeks.

Veronica: Thank you, Michael, for your partnership, and thank you, Head Start community, for letting me share our program strategies with you.