

## Starting Smart and Strong Initiative | Overview

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The David and Lucile Packard Foundation recognizes that the foundations for long-term success in school and in life are laid in a child's first five years. To achieve long-term success, in March 2015 the Packard Foundation launched the Starting Smart and Strong Initiative (S3I), a ten-year initiative that strives to ensure all children grow up healthy and ready for kindergarten by improving the quality of adult-child interactions across all settings where young children learn and grow.

The Packard Foundation is partnering with three California communities to develop and test solutions that support parents, caregivers, and educators as they prepare children to be healthy and ready for school with self-confidence and a love of learning. This ten-year initiative brings together public and private supporters to create local comprehensive early learning networks, and ultimately scale what works. The first Starting Smart and Strong grants were awarded to the Franklin-McKinley School District in San Jose, Fresno Unified School District, and Oakland Public Education Fund who will work closely with community partners to lead and implement the initiative in their communities.

### Initiative Goals

The goals of the Starting Smart and Strong Initiative are to:

- Improve professional development and training for early education and care providers to improve the quality of care provided through the formal system;
- Provide parents, extended family members, and informal caregivers who care for children with the skills and support they need to provide nurturing environments for children to grow, learn, and adopt life-long healthy habits; and
- Bring together public and private systems to create comprehensive early learning systems that model quality practice and training, ensure adequate distribution of resources, and have the potential to improve, innovate, and scale over time.

### Four Pillars

To reach these goals, the three S3I communities will work to develop, test, rapidly prototype, and implement to scale a system of care and a set of practices that reaches all early education and care providers in the community. This requires each community to commit to a common vision, work across sectors, learn and continuously improve, align resources, and scale effective practices. The communities will become part of a network of learning and work toward implementing the Four Pillars of the initiative:

1. Testing professional development and training models for early childhood educators in formal settings;
2. Testing new approaches to support and provide resources for informal caregivers, and to ensure authentic parent engagement;
3. Working to ensure healthy development of young children through access to universal developmental screenings and appropriate responses; and
4. Scaling what works by creating strong systems, committing resources, and engaging committed leaders who are willing to take action.

To effectively build the Four Pillars as cornerstones of the work, each community will receive ongoing support in key areas that will also serve as catalysts for larger systems-level change. These include, but are not limited to:

- Support for experimentation, innovation, and network formation from the Early Learning Lab;
- Technical assistance from embedded technical assistance providers in each community;
- Multi-year systems and local-level evaluations for ongoing learning opportunities;
- Local- and state-level advocacy including champion building; and
- Communication guidance to showcase lessons from the work in each community and across the initiative.

For more information, please visit [www.Packard.org](http://www.Packard.org)