

# Educator touts benefits of preschool

By Vicki Barber

Helping children succeed in school and life is the primary focus of education. We are blessed in El Dorado County to have a K-12 system with high academic standards and safe learning environments where our children can and do excel.

Of the many factors which contribute to school success, a quality preschool experience builds early reading and math skills, and strong early learning foundations. Preschool exposes children to a language-rich environment that increases cognitive development and love of learning. It also provides the opportunity to learn the social and self-regulatory skills essential to peer relationships and classroom success.

In today's tough economic times, some families may think they need to go without a preschool experience because of challenged family budgets. Families in this situation may not be aware that a child with unemployed parents is qualified for Head Start and State Preschool programs which are offered throughout the county in public school and private preschool settings. As an example, a family of four with monthly income of \$4,188 is still eligible for free state preschool. Families qualify at the time of enrollment, and then, no matter what their changing circumstances, they remain eligible for the program for entire program year.

Studies show that the academic and social skills learned in preschool improve student achievement, lead to increased graduation rates, and as well as increased potential for college attendance. I urge all of our El Dorado County families to support our youngest learners and find a preschool experience for their children which fits their family needs.

For families wanting more information about finding a preschool opportunity for their child, they can call any of the following numbers:

Choices for Children â€” (530) 676.0707

El Dorado County Office of Education â€” (530) 295.2307

Happy Kids Preschool and Child Care Center â€” (530) 676.2223

A Circle of Friends â€” (530) 622.5437

Cool Care â€” (530) 889.1119

Pinetop Montessori â€” (530) 644.4373.

*Vicki Barber is superintendent of El Dorado County Office of Education.*