By Linda L. Huynh, Editor

If you’re a parent, working or not, with children at home during the pandemic, you may have already come to this conclusion — children need to be with other children and a place for the socialization is preschool. Our kids, rearing in many ethnic climates in Hawaii, may have the support of immediate and extended family, with whose children benefit from caring relationships. All of these familial interactions are essential to bringing the building blocks of identity, self-confidence and emotional well-being. In addition to these supportive relationships, children also need the nurturing, developmental experiences that come from interactions with peers and other adults in settings outside the home, the classroom.

The value of preschool has been often associated with long-term educational, social and emotional benefits. In short, our youngest citizens who experience school are more likely to become quality child caregivers, have a better chance of growing into responsible adults who contribute positively to the community. Longitudinal studies indicate better academic success, higher grades, higher test scores, higher graduation rates and lower incarceration rates. While all of these benefits are important for the whole of society, the social-emotional benefits of preschool are especially impactful on brain development.

Preschool is an integral part of the network. Kids need other kids, and other adults. It is the basic principle of learning. In the early 20th century, Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky’s theory of the zone of proximal development suggested that interactions with others — adults, yes, and peers, even more so — nurture the child’s self-confidence, the very place where some hope is restored from cancer to mushroom this. Zone of “Social Competence” in early years is essential to the mission and well of Princess Leilani. It is an umbrella covering nearly 30 preschools statewide.

Preschools were the first education centers to open in the state after retrograding procedures and updating safety protocols amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The issue of quality child care has been fraught with hardship and confusion amid heightened awareness in previous state administration. The result has led to establishing the Executive Office of Early Learning in 2016. In 2020, the department presided funding to add 10 preschool-kindergarten for 2-5-year-olds to the existing 21 early learning classrooms.

Across the United States, the need for early learning and care support because the pandemic has increased, surging nation-wide for non-profit, for-profit, and other preschools in Hawaii. Our keiki, representing our cognitive, emotional and physical needs, require the support of a partner to help them cross the bridge in their journey. It results in the development of systemic and care. The program is so critical that children thrive on it.

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