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Kidango Part-day Preschool Program Receives International Recognition

Fremont, CA (March 15, 2010) Kidango, a local child development agency, announced today that its quality early education, early intervention, and mental health programs are being recognized on an international level. Throughout its 30-year history, Kidango has received numerous accolades and commendations at the local, State, and national level for the high quality of its child development programs and the positive impact they have on children's success. Today, Kidango is pleased to announce that it has received global recognition!

On March 11, 2010, Carol T. Smith, Policy Advisor to State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell from the California Department of Education and three (3) dignitaries from Japan, Professor Chie Nakajima, Takako Shinohara, and Mariko Ichimi Abumiya, visited the Kidango Hillview Crest Part-day Preschool located on-site at the Hillview Crest Elementary School in Hayward, California.

The Japanese delegation's visit to California was for research purposes and was funded by the Japanese Ministry of Education. The research group, headed by Professor Nakajima of Kyoto Bunkyo Junior College, focused on successful transitions from preschool to kindergarten, and from kindergarten to first grade in California.

During their visit to California, the delegation met with administrators, principals, and teachers at seven different programs throughout Sacramento County, Placer County, and Alameda County. Kidango's State Child Development Consultant, Margo Hunkins, recommended Kidango as one of the programs to visit because of the agency's ability to build strong, collaborative relationships with school districts and community partners to effectively prepare children for kindergarten and future school success.

"It is a great honor that Kidango was recommended as a program to visit, and the fact that my center was chosen out of our agency's thirty-six (36) locations, is wonderful compliment to me and my staff, for our work is being recognized," said Center Director Victoria Kushelyad. Kushelyad has been the Center Director at the Kidango Hillview Crest Part-day Preschool Program for six (6) years, and in that time she and her staff have formed strong partnerships with the teachers and administrators at Hillview Crest Elementary School in the New Haven Unified School District.

In the Kidango part-day preschool program, children ages three to five attend a three-hour morning or afternoon session aimed at kindergarten preparedness. One of the key components to this program is preparing for the transition to kindergarten. To prepare for smoother transitions, Kushelyad invites the school's kindergarten teachers to routinely visit her preschool classrooms and attend parent meetings. Additionally, she brings her preschool children to the

school's library/media center and age-appropriate school assemblies and events. In the months before the children transition to kindergarten, Kushelyad brings the children to their future kindergarten classrooms to become familiar with the environment. Ensuring that the children are comfortable with their future kindergarten teachers and in their classrooms is key to their successful transition and future academic success. Kidango has 6 additional preschool programs located at other New Haven Unified Elementary schools and at each location, Kidango follows similar transition methods.

Kushelyad explained these transition methods to Professor Nakajima, Shinohara, and Abumiya and arranged opportunities for them to speak with kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers so they could share their experiences with the positive impact Kidango's transition methods have on their students. Brenda, a second grade teacher, also provided a parent perspective as both her daughters attended Kidango's preschool program. During their visit, the dignitaries also learned about Kidango's curriculum, its methods for measuring and documenting a child's individual development, and the additional support provided by Kidango's internal early intervention and mental health programs. Professor Nakajima continuously commented, "that everything is just so impressive."

In addition to providing the delegation with the information and ideas they were hoping to gain from Kidango, the staff and children were the perfect hosts. Signs welcoming the guests in English and Japanese adorned the preschool classrooms. Upon entry into the preschool, the children bowed and said "youkoso" (welcome in Japanese) in respect to the visitors and went on to sing and dance in celebration of their arrival. Additionally, Center Director Maria Paquiz from Kidango Hubbard Part-day Preschool in San Jose attended the visit to help translate for the Japanese dignitaries. Paquiz taught English in Japan for four years and the dignitaries greatly appreciated her assistance. "It is an honor to be a part of this special day at Kidango. It is wonderful that our agency is being globally recognized for both our quality programming and our ability to form collaborative partnerships," commented Paquiz.

About Kidango

Kidango, Inc. is a private, not-for-profit children's agency. It began as Tri-Cities Children's Centers, Inc. in 1979 and at inception there were 90 children and families being served at one center in Fremont. As a leader in early care and education, Kidango offers a wide variety of programs to meet the diverse needs of children 0-12 years of age and their families. Currently there are 36 centers throughout the Bay Area and the agency is continuously expanding to meet the growing needs of children and families. Today more than 2,500 children and families are served in Alameda and Santa Clara Counties each year.

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