



EDUCATION COMMISSION
OF THE STATES
Your education policy team.

TRANSITIONS AND K-3 ALIGNMENT

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES,
EARLY LEARNING FELLOWS

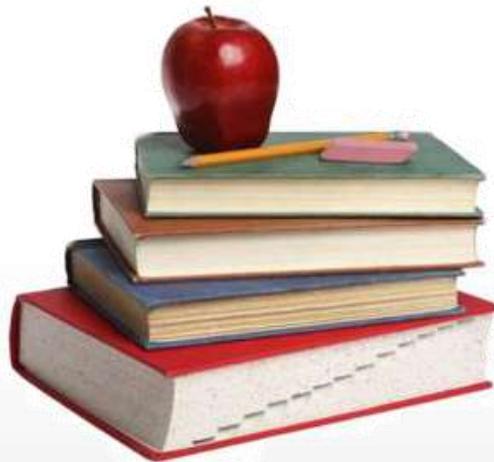
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EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES

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What we do

We believe in the power of **learning from experience** and we know informed policymakers create **better education policy**.



P-20 Continuum: The Bookends



Early Childhood

K-12

Post-Secondary

Spotlight on K-3

Birth - pre-K Kindergarten 1st Grade 2nd Grade 3rd Grade

Transitions to Kindergarten

WHY POLICYMAKERS SHOULD PAY ATTENTION:

- Moving from home or pre-K one of the most critical transition points
- Young children vulnerable to discontinuities in their environments, i.e.
 - New physical surroundings
 - New relationships with peers and adults
 - New rules and expectations
 - New ways of learning
- When transitions are effective provide supports children and families needs, seamless continuum of education.
- Inadequate or nonexistent transitions can lead to:
 - High levels of stress which can interfere with engagement and performance
 - Chronic absenteeism
 - Poor social adjustment
 - Failure to make academic gains needed to succeed by grade 3 and beyond.

Transitions to Kindergarten

- Additionally impacts families, teachers, and administrators
- Effective transition approaches require that two traditionally separate learning systems (ECE and K-12) become more coordinated and aligned.
- What effective transition activities and policies may achieve:
 - Fostering relationships – teacher to teacher, teacher to parent, parent to administrator
 - Promoting continuity from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the public schools
 - Tailoring practices to individual needs of the child, level of school readiness
 - Focus on family strengths and engagement in child's education
 - Implementing positive transition practices, i.e. joint home visits, sharing of records, classroom visits, expectations.
 - A seamless continuum of education in the P-3 space

Policy and Transitions to Kindergarten

- **Education Commission of the States K-3 State Policy Database** - 18 states plus D.C. provide guidance for the pre-K to kindergarten transition process. Often includes written transition plans, family engagement, teacher/provider meetings, and assessment data linkages.
(go to www.ecs.org, type in K-3 data base to pull down specific state statutes)
- **Illinois: HB 2663** last session, provides that early childhood programs shall prohibit the expulsion of children. Directs state agencies to recommend training, technical supports, **transitions**, and professional development resources to improve the ability of teachers, administrators, program directors, and other staff to promote social-emotional development and behavioral health.

Potential Policies to Improve Transitions:

- **Create Governance Mechanisms;** Establish governance mechanisms and strategies that formalize and institutionalize efforts to link and align across early learning, early grades, and across departments i.e. SEA, Department of Human Services (child care), Health, etc. (Connecticut, Ohio, Pennsylvania specific to transitions)
- **Improve Early Elementary Education;** Improve the quality of early elementary education (K-3) so that it clearly supports the success of young children and better aligns and links with 0-5, including the transition of P-K
- **Build Data-Gathering and Sharing Systems;** Build, sustain, and link data systems that support ongoing improvements to access, quality and equity across the early learning and early elementary years.
- **Upgrade Teacher Training in ECE;** Improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, assistant teachers and practitioners in both early learning and early elementary school settings.
- **Improve Administrative Leadership;** Improve the quality and effectiveness of leaders in both early learning and elementary education including principals, assistant principals and superintendents.

Why K-3

- Disconnect between 0-5 and K-3 components of the 0-8 continuum.
- Risk of losing gains made in a high-quality pre-K if the K-3 experience that follows does not continue developmentally appropriate practices.
- Of the 2.5 million students who dropped out of high school last year, 1.6 million were set on that trajectory when they were 8 years old.
- 20% of the American labor force is functionally illiterate or innumerate!
- Over 25 states have passed legislation geared towards improving 3rd grade reading (interventions, extended learning time, retention, etc.).
- A qualified workforce and principal leadership armed with the skills needed to provide age appropriate learning opportunities is key.

Our Goal

- To address quality in Kindergarten through third grade by identifying areas states can consider for improvement, and highlighting policies that create a seamless and high-quality P-3 system that better serves students.



K-3 Quality Partners

- Education Commission of the States
- National Institute for Early Education Research
- Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes
- National Conference of State Legislatures
- New America
- National P-3 Center (University of Washington)

Other participants include; National Governors Association, Council of Chief State School Officers, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association for the Education of Young Children, and National Association of State Boards of Education.

50 State Comparison/Database: K-3 Quality

50-State Comparison: K-3 Quality Highlights



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Basic Requirements

- 14 states plus D.C. require full-day kindergarten and only 11 specifically require that kindergarten programs have the same length of day as grades one through three.
- Kindergarten length-of-day requirements vary from two to seven hours per day. In grades one through three, length-of-day requirements vary from four to seven hours per day.
- 31 states provide teacher-to-student ratio requirements, ranging from 1:15 to 1:33 for kindergarten and 1:17 to 1:32 in grades one through three.

School Readiness and Transitions

- 32 states plus D.C. require the administration of a kindergarten entrance assessment. 18 states provide guidance around what these assessment results should inform.
- 18 states plus D.C. provide guidance for the pre-k to kindergarten transition process.
- An official statutory definition of "school readiness" exists in six states plus D.C. Many states outline their definitions in the state's Early Learning Guidelines, instead of in state statute.

Assessment, Intervention and Retention

- 39 states plus D.C. require assessments in any or all K-3 grades and 36 states provide guidance around what those assessment results should be used to inform.
- 40 states plus D.C. provide guidance around a system of interventions for struggling students.
- 18 states plus D.C. require third grade retention and 14 of those offer conditional promotion options. All states that require retention also require a system of intervention.



50 State Comparison/Database: K-3 Quality

Instructional Quality

- Some form of teacher preparation and/or professional development in reading is required for educators in K-3 in at least 37 states. Many of these requirements include training on reading instruction, using reading assessment results and providing interventions.
- 23 states require classroom teachers to have some form of training or professional development related to instruction for ELLs. These are most often general requirements around language acquisition and cultural competency.

Family Engagement

- 13 states require their pre-k to kindergarten transition programs to engage families of future kindergarteners.
- 21 states plus D.C. require some level of parental involvement in the promotion/retention process. In most of these states, parental notification is the minimum requirement.
- 20 states plus D.C. require parental engagement for ELLs.

Social-Emotional Learning

- 36 states plus D.C. emphasize social-emotional learning in grades K-3 in statute, rules or regulations.
- At least 9 states include a measure of social-emotional development in their kindergarten entrance exams, by statute.
- At least 13 states require teachers in K-3 to have training in social-emotional development.
- Social-emotional development is included as a domain in 7 of the states with Early Learning Guidelines that include K-3.

K-3 Guide to Action



- **Funding: Strategic, Blended, Equitable**
- **Full – Day - Kindergarten and Mandatory Age Requirements**
- **Workforce Development : Teachers and Leaders**
- **Systems Alignment**
- **Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment**
- **Accountability Metric (not student based)**

Why Full-Day Kindergarten

- **87% of parents favor a full-day kindergarten (FDK) program**
- **Research studies confirm that attendance in FDK results in academic and social benefits for students**
- **Children in FDK programs gain 12.8 % more than children in half-day programs on reading assessments between fall and spring**
- **Children in FDK gain 10.3% more than children in half day programs on math assessments between fall and spring**
- **Low-income children show lasting academic and behavioral benefits including increased graduation rates.**
- **Teachers have more time for in depth lessons that give children academic foundations, time to reinforce proper behavior, and time for hands on exploration.**

On Principal Leadership

What we know:

- A strong principal can dramatically improve school culture, climate, and student outcomes in a short period of time
- We know how principals do this (vision, people, systems, support, team)
- We know that a capable and motivated teacher can learn how to become such a principal
- Leadership challenge #1: organizing a school to support K-3 adult and student learning at scale

On Principal Leadership

Leadership Challenge #2: We don't yet know how to do "it" at scale:

- The scale of the principal preparation challenge is within our resources to address (approximately 10,000 principals annually, 80% of principals are white).
- We do not know how to organize ourselves to address the problem of scale—across districts or states
- The organizational challenge is systemic, requiring districts and the state to function together

Next-Generation Principals

Characteristics of Next-Generation Principal Prep/Development Programs:

- Results-oriented focus on principal impact on schools
- Embed early childhood education throughout preparation for elementary school principals.
- Full time, intensively coached, site-based learning (residencies, internships)
- Integration of academic and practical learning
- Structured post-licensure support to accelerate early-career development and success
- District and state policy supports

Leadership

Organizing for improvement:

- Ready Schools
 - Ready Students
 - Ready Families
 - Ready Communities
-
- School Leadership – school culture, staffing, compliance, scheduling etc.
 - Student Centered Learning Climate
 - Instructional Guidance and Support
 - Parental Engagement
 - Representing Programs in the Community

Sample Standards of Quality in K-3

- K-3 leadership and staff assist in facilitating a successful transition from home, preschool or childcare into kindergarten.
- K-3 leadership ensures that school personnel establish and maintain a developmentally appropriate culture conducive to learning needs of K-3 students.
- K-3 leadership ensures that school staff is qualified to develop and implement the K-3 program specific to the developmental needs of the children and families served.
- K-3 leadership and staff recognize that the development of strong, meaningful partnerships between home and school are critically important in grades K-3
- Staff creates a learning environment that is child-centered and reflects the unique needs, experiences and interests of K-3 students
- K-3 leadership and staff plan the curriculum, schedule the day, and create an environment where students can learn through active involvement with each other and adults, with adequate time during the day and week for each content area.
- Staff organize classroom space into functional learning areas such as individual workspaces and group-gathering areas that students recognize and allow for social interactions.

Sample Standards of Quality in K-3

- K-3 teachers are knowledgeable about the developmental continuum and learning trajectories/progressions of K-3 learners
- K-3 teachers use a variety of active and intellectually engaging strategies to promote critical thinking and learning.
- K-3 teachers structure the learning environment to enhance positive adult-to-student and student-to-student interactions.
- Leadership and staff ensure that the curriculum provides opportunities for students to explore and investigate their own interests and actively learn the content expectations specific to their grade level.
- Leadership and staff ensure that the curriculum is delivered with an integrated approach, rather than teaching subject areas in isolation
- The Curriculum provides integrated learning activities that are real and relevant to student's lives.
- Teachers receive training in observational and direct assessment literacy so they can interpret and use results to inform instruction.

Actions to Consider

- Ensure early learning guidelines have been adopted by either the state legislature or the state board of education and align with state's K-12 standards.
- Ensure Kindergarten teachers are required to have an early childhood education license, or endorsement.
- Adopt social/emotional standards for the early grades.
- Encourage use of curricula that emphasizes student-centered learning through developmentally appropriate play and exploration that is sensitive to students' age, individuality, culture and home language.
- Ensure that literacy development is recognized and supported as a unique gateway to academic success in all content areas.
- Utilize age and culturally-appropriate formative assessments that measure student growth and intentionally inform leaders and teachers in a timely manner.
- Ensure individual assessments are utilized to guide instruction and for diagnostic purposes.

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