

# StateTAResources

## Birth Through Third Grade: Sustaining Program Effects

This resource was prepared for an Early Learning Challenge (ELC) State in response to a request for information about activities that are taking place in ELC States to strengthen birth through grade 3 collaboration to ensure gains made in one year are reinforced and built upon in the next. This information will be helpful to other States as they explore the possibilities presented by the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) to better align their school improvement plans with what is known about child development and early learning from birth to third grade.

To address this request, ELC TA reviewed the individual [2016 Annual Performance Reports](#) (APRS) from the 11 Phase 2 and Phase 3 States and the [2016 Final Performance Reports](#) (FPRs) from the nine Phase 1 States that were submitted to the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services in the spring of 2017. ELC TA also consulted individual State websites for updated information. Additional resources were gathered from States at the ELC Annual Grantee Meeting in October 2017.

The ELC Invitational Priority 4<sup>1</sup> encouraged States to plan how they would sustain and build upon improved early learning throughout the early elementary school years. This document describes State initiatives in the following areas:

- Enhancing the State's learning [standards](#) for kindergarten through third grade to align them with the early learning and development standards across all essential domains of school readiness;
- [Leveraging existing Federal, State, and local resources](#), including but not limited to funds received under Title I and Title II of ESEA, as amended, and IDEA;
- [Implementing Kindergarten through Grade 3 assessment](#);
- Providing [professional development](#) to support communities and school leaders and teachers to provide a developmentally appropriate learning environment;
- Ensuring that [transition](#) planning occurs for children moving from early learning and development programs to elementary schools;
- Promoting [family engagement](#), including in the early grades; and
- Hiring [State-level specialist](#) to facilitate the birth through third grade continuum.

Twelve ELC States (**Colorado, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington**) described in their 2016 APRs or FPRs specific strategies for ensuring the successes of the pre-kindergarten years carried into the early elementary school years.

This document does not include all activities to support birth through third grade collaboration in the ELC States. Some States may have initiatives that they completed in previous years, and some States may not have planned to begin their initiatives until 2017 after the 2016 APRs were

submitted. In addition, States may have other activities that they did not include in their APRs and FPRs because those initiatives were addressed outside of their ELC grant project plans.

## Early Learning Standards

---

Early learning standards provide guidance to families, teachers, and administrators on what children should know and be able to do at different stages of their early childhood development, which is defined as the years from birth to age 8. In some States, age 8 is considered second grade, and in other States it is third grade. Essential domains of early learning include language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development), approaches toward learning, physical well-being and motor development (including adaptive skills), and social and emotional development. Several ELC States updated their early learning standards to include more domains or aligned them across more developmental ages.

Three States (Colorado, Vermont, and Washington) each have a single document that describes their birth to third grade standards.

- The [Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines](#) describe the path of children's learning and development from birth to 8-years-old. The Guidelines are aligned with and complement the Colorado Academic Standards for preschool through third grade.
- In **Vermont**, the new birth to grade 3 [Vermont Early Learning Standards](#) (VELS) were adopted by the State Board of Education in August 2015. In 2016, VELS were being incorporated throughout the State early childhood system. In 2017, Vermont continued to design a VELS interactive web platform.
- The [Washington Early Learning Guidelines](#) extend through grade 3, include all areas of development, and are compatible with other key standards (including Common Core and Head Start).

Maryland' standards for birth to 8 years standards are aligned with standards for pre-kindergarten through grade 2.

The [Maryland Early Learning Standards Birth–8 Years](#) reflect the alignment of the Healthy Beginnings' indicators from *Supporting Development and Learning from Birth through Three Years of Age* and the prekindergarten to grade 2 portion of the *Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards*.

Oregon has birth to kindergarten standards. They added standards for social-emotional learning and approaches to learning to their kindergarten standards.

In 2016, **Oregon** completed the process of aligning and expanding their [Oregon's Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines](#) for children ages 3 through kindergarten. The Guidelines include

new kindergarten standards in the domains of social-emotional development and approaches to learning.

Three States (Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island) noted they have birth to pre-kindergarten standards that are aligned with kindergarten to grade 12 standards.

- The **Ohio** [Early Learning and Development Standards](#) were aligned to the Kindergarten–Grade 12 State Standards and adopted by the State Board of Education in October 2013. They were then used as a basis for the Early Learning and Kindergarten Readiness Assessments, as well as professional development opportunities provided to early childhood professionals.
- **Pennsylvania's** [Early Learning Standards for Early Childhood](#) delineate benchmarks along the birth to grade 2 continuum. Pennsylvania's Infant/Toddler and Pre-Kindergarten Learning Standards for Early Childhood were revised in 2014. Revisions to the kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 2 standards were distributed in 2016. Each set of standards were aligned with standards that span to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- **Rhode Island's** [Early Learning and Development Standards](#) for birth to 60-month were completed in 2013. The final standards are vertically integrated with K–12 standards.

*Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards were one of the greatest accomplishments the state achieved during the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant. The progress Ohio made in early childhood education across settings and silos, supported by Early Learning Challenge Grant, came about because these standards created the foundation for everything from assessments to a tiered quality rating and improvement system to professional development.*

[Ohio 2016 FPR](#), p. 36

Massachusetts adopted two new sets of standards. Both set of standards were translated into five different languages.

- In November 2013, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care adopted WIDA™'s [Early English Language Development Standards](#) (E-ELD) to provide a developmentally sound framework for supporting, instructing, and assessing dual language learners, ages 2.5 through 5.5 years. The E-ELD document corresponds to the State's Early Learning Standards and the Head Start's Child Development and Early Learning Framework.
- The [Preschool and Kindergarten Social and Emotional Learning and Approaches to Play and Learning Standards](#) bring attention to these critical areas of development and learning and support a learning continuum from birth through school age.

## Federal, State, and Local Resources

---

Colorado and Minnesota offered grants to school districts to support pre-kindergarten through third grade planning, programming, and professional development.

- **Colorado** funded Ready Schools Grants in 17 schools and local school districts across the State to enhance and improve kindergarten programming. The grant focused on the continued development of approaches to school readiness, increasing and refining kindergarten teacher knowledge of child development, and the use of best practices in early childhood pedagogy. Grant activities included observation-based formative assessment practices, improving classroom environments designed to support the whole child and independent student choice during the instructional day, and alignment and implementation of systems and practices from preschool through third grade.
- **Minnesota** offered Title I Incentive Grants to School Districts for Pre-K and K–12 Coordination to incentivize the expansion and creation of programs that meet the requirements of the Title I guidance. Twenty-seven school districts, including two charter schools, utilized Title I funds and Title I Pre-K Incentives. Districts reported increased coordination between early childhood and K–12 and improved relationships internally and with families and community partners. To support districts, Minnesota developed a webpage for grant recipients with resources and strategies. A budget tool was also developed to help districts with program planning and blending and braiding funds.
- **Minnesota** also offered Title I Pre-K Incentive grant to schools for the Pre-K Through Third Grade Principal Leadership Series focused on building principals' competencies to effectively lead pre-kindergarten through third grade efforts.

Massachusetts and Pennsylvania offered grants to communities to support pre-kindergarten through third grade planning, programming, and professional development.

- From 2012 to 2015, the **Massachusetts** Department of Early Education and Care awarded the Birth to Grade Three (B–3) Community Implementation/Planning grants to 12 communities. At the core of the B–3 communities' work was developing strong partnerships and collaboration among partners serving young children and their families to improve outcomes for young children. Communities used the grant to strengthen the existing B–3 infrastructure such as family engagement, improved alignment and transitions among community based early learning programs and public schools, improved third grade literacy scores, professional development for educators and administrators, and school readiness.
- In 2016, **Pennsylvania** offered \$4,000 prototype mini-grants to community teams that had attended any of the statewide Pre-natal–Third Grade Governor's Institutes since 2014. Teams used the stipend to explore systems change strategies (e.g. learning journeys,

immersion experiences, multi-stakeholder meetings) and/or strategies detailed within the Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating Pre-K–3rd Grade Approaches. Sixty-seven teams had applied for mini-grants as of December 1, 2016.

## Kindergarten Through Grade 3 Formative Assessment

---

North Carolina has several initiatives to use assessment to improve instruction from pre-kindergarten through third grade.

- The **North Carolina K-3 Formative Assessment Process** provides a valid, reliable kindergarten entry assessment that measures five domains of development for use by all kindergarten through third grade teachers. It will be implemented statewide in first, second, and third grades following additional pilot testing as the initiative scales up during the years beyond the grant, with a strong State-funded sustainability plan in place.
- The **North Carolina** Department of Public Instruction worked with the [FirstSchool](#) initiative of the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill to strengthen the use of assessment data to guide instruction in pre-kindergarten through third grade. This included coaching and professional development throughout the year for teachers, leadership teams, and principals for all schools as well as central office staff. Regular K–3 team meetings were held within schools to review data and plan school and classroom improvement. Facilitated visits to the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten demonstration classroom with a debriefing following continued with elementary school principals and elementary program directors to help them to gain a deeper understanding of play-based learning.

## Professional Development

---

Three States (Maryland, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania) provided support for community leadership teams to address the birth through third grade continuum.

- **Maryland** provided professional development for the third summer for combined school and community teams in Title I school areas that focused on increasing their knowledge of early learning development and the standards in the STEM areas of the domains of Social Foundations, Science, and Mathematics.
- During the four years of the RTT-ELC grant, the **Massachusetts** Department of Early Education and Care conducted the Early Educators Fellowship Initiative (EEFI), a community-based leadership series for teams of three to five colleagues from different early education sectors serving children from birth to grade 3. EEFI consisted of a series of day-long workshops featuring a combination of presentations, case studies, interactive discussions, and small group work. The framework of EEFI was intentionally aligned with existing State birth through grade 3 initiatives such as the Birth to Third Grade Alignment grants to local

communities, the Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA), and Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

- Over the past several years, **Pennsylvania** supported annual statewide networking meetings that provided a collaborative learning exchange. Selected teams participated in regional [P-3 Governor's Institutes](#). These 2–3-day events focused on planning, implementing, and evaluating pre-kindergarten through third grade approaches. In 2016, 86 teams attended one of the Institutes. Teams members were required to include a birth-5 administrator, a birth-5 teacher/practitioner, a K-3 administrator, and a K-3 teacher/practitioner. Additional members could include a family leader or family member, an early intervention partner, a community member, a librarian, a curriculum specialist, a higher education partner, an intermediate unit representative, and an out-of-school time representative. The multi-day events allowed participants to build connections across geography and role and begin to appreciate others' experience and their value as potential resources.

**Four States (Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Washington) provided professional development and support for school leaders and educators.**

A key lesson learned during the ELC grant period was that support from school and district level administrators is essential to successfully build aligned systems that address the needs of children in the early elementary grades. States found that if the principal is on board, work moves forward and partnerships with families and community programs are strengthened.

- **Minnesota** offered a PreK–3 Implementation Series with [professional learning offerings](#) for principals, district leaders, and educators.
  - The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association partnered with the McKnight Foundation to support a statewide PreK-3 Principal Leadership series to guide principals in creating and supporting connections between early learning and K–12. Spring 2017 marked the third cohort of leadership teams throughout the State participating in the five-session series. As of the end of 2016, 95 school districts had participated in the initiative.
  - In addition, MDE hosted a pre-kindergarten through third grade online course cohort and planned to offer a second cohort to help district leaders build, implement, and evaluate highly effective pre-kindergarten through third grade strategies and systems in their schools, districts, and communities. The course is based on [Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems](#) by Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn.
  - Finally, the online course, [Building Rigorous and Robust PreK-3 Learning Environments: The Art of Communication in Classrooms for Young Children](#), is

offered free to Minnesota educators. Developed and facilitated by FirstSchool at the UNC at Chapel Hill, the course provides tailored tracks for teachers and administrators and includes 12 online modules and one in-person session.

- The **Pennsylvania** Office of Child Development and Early Learning, in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, created the course *P-3: Comprehensive Prenatal through Grade 3 Alignment for Student Success* incorporates a P-3 alignment focus. This course is a requirement of the Community Innovation Zone (CIZ) grantees. This coursework focuses on communication and effective strategies among all stakeholders in a P–3 system where the 0–5 and K–3 administrators lead in modeling the process. Beginning in September 2016, two pilots were offered to 0-5 and K-3 administrators across the State, including the CIZ grantees. Full implementation was scheduled for 2017.
- **Vermont** implemented FirstSchool, an initiative of the Frank Porter Graham Center of UNC at Chapel Hill. Six Pre-K through 3rd grade school communities participated in the FirstSchool pilot project. Throughout the pilot project, FirstSchool is providing two and a half years of extensive professional development (e.g., weeklong summer institute, bi-monthly onsite coaching) to the administrators and educators in the Pre-K through 3rd Grade learning communities. For 2016, Vermont Agency of Education staff agreed that, instead of providing a four-day summer institute, FirstSchool should facilitate a two-day summer institute for leadership teams from all the school communities to attend jointly, and then one day of targeted professional development at each school, along with classroom observation and coaching visits. FirstSchool involves the use of EduSnap data to drive decision-making about teaching practices at the classroom, grade, and school levels. The Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) Institute took place June 2016 at Champlain College. Over 200 participants who work with children birth through third grade and their families attended a two-day institute and left with a copy of the VELS, as well as resources and information for using the VELS to support high-quality learning opportunities for each young Vermont child.
- In the State of **Washington**, online Early Learning Guidelines training is required for all State-approved trainers and participants in Washington’s QRIS, Early Achievers. The standards extend through grade 3. The Guidelines include all areas of development, are compatible with other key standards (including Common Core and Head Start), and are structured to promote cultural inclusiveness and accessibility to a variety of audiences.

## Transition Planning

---

In **Maryland**, Parent-Child Learning Parties supported the successful transition from early childhood settings to public schools. These events were implemented in Title 1 neighborhoods with the participation of teachers and parents and their rising kindergarteners. Learning



Parties were held in child care programs, public pre-kindergarten programs, Judy Centers, libraries, and a homeless shelter.

## Family Engagement

---

The **Pennsylvania** Office of Child Development and Early Learning partnered with School Readiness Consulting to conduct a family engagement implementation study to understand the innovative, effective, and successful family engagement work that 12 Community Investment Zones grantees were implementing in their respective communities to support families of children pre-natal to third grade.

## State-Level Specialist to Address Birth to Third Grade B-3 Continuum

---

The **Michigan** Department of Education used the ELC grant to hire a State Transformation Specialist to engage State agencies and communities in the birth to third grade continuum.

## Resources

---

The following resources were gathered from selected ELC and Preschool Development Grant (PDG) grantees during the *Policies and Practices Supporting the Birth through Grade Three Continuum* networking session at the 2017 PDG and ELC Annual Grantee meeting in October 2017.

### State Resources

#### *Connecticut*

- [Title I - Parent Involvement](#). Connecticut State Department of Education: School-Family-Community Partnerships. [Webpage].
  - [Position Statement on School-Family-Community Partnerships for Student Success](#). Connecticut State Board of Education. 2009.
  - [Policy Guidance for Position Statement on School-Family-Community Partnerships for Student Success](#). Connecticut State Board of Education. 2009.

#### *Kentucky*

- [Superintendents Toolbox](#). Kentucky Governor's Office of Early Childhood. [Webpage].
- [Kentucky School Readiness Summit](#). [Webpage].

#### *Louisiana*

- [Louisiana's Pre-K Through Third Grade Guidebook for Sites and System Leaders](#). Louisiana Department of Education: Louisiana Believes. 2017.

#### *Michigan*

- [Michigan Office of Great Start](#). [Website].
- [General Education Leadership Network \(GELN\): Early Literacy](#). General Education Leadership Network, Early Literacy Task Force. [\[Webpage\]](#).



- [Essential School-Wide and Center-Wide Practices in Literacy: Prekindergarten and Elementary Grades](#). General Education Leadership Network, Early Literacy Task Force. 2017.
- [Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy Prekindergarten](#). General Education Leadership Network (GELN) Early Literacy Task Force. 2016.
- [Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Grades K to 3](#). General Education Leadership Network (GELN) Early Literacy Task Force. 2016.

#### *Pennsylvania*

- [P-3 Governor's Institute: P-3 Collaboration: Application](#). Pennsylvania Department of Education.

#### *Tennessee*

- [Evidence for the Benefits of State Pre-Kindergarten Programs: Myth and Misrepresentation](#). Vanderbilt Peabody College. 2015.
- [Response to the Vanderbilt PreK Study Results](#). People First: A Memphis Fast Forward Initiative. 2015.

#### *Washington*

- [Certificate in Washington P-3 Executive Leadership](#). University of Washington. [Webpage].

#### **Additional Resources**

- BUILD Initiative. [Aligning Early Learning with K-12](#). [Webpage].
- Center for American Progress. [A Different Way of Doing Business: Examples of Pre-K to Third Grade Alignment in Practice](#). 2016. This issue brief summarizes interviews with **California (Marin County), Illinois (Chicago), Massachusetts, Michigan (Lansing), New Jersey, Oregon, and Pennsylvania**.
- Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CELLO). [CEELO Resources - Birth Through Third Grade](#). [Webpage].

---

<sup>i</sup> U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Federal Register*. Part III: 2011 RTT-ELC Notice Inviting Applications, 76 FR 5356, 53568. August 26, 2011. <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-08-26/pdf/2011-21756.pdf>

*This resource was developed as part of the Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance (ELC TA) Program through a contract from the U.S. Department of Education, run in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families. The findings, conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. ELC TA is administered by AEM Corporation. For more information, visit [www.elcta.org](http://www.elcta.org).*