PreK-3 Alignment: Challenges and Opportunities in California

January 10, 2020
PACE’s mission: **Improving education policy and practice and advancing equity through evidence**

PACE is an independent, non-partisan research center that bridges the gap between research, policy, and practice, through:

1. bringing evidence to bear on the most critical issues facing our state;
2. making research evidence accessible; and
3. leveraging partnership and collaboration to drive system improvement.

PACE is led by faculty directors at:
Our goal is to produce research within all levels of California’s education system, with a particular focus on alignment in systems. We focus on the following topics:

1. **Access, quality and alignment in early childhood education**
   - Educational governance & leadership
2. **K-12 continuous school improvement and support**
   - Education finance
   - Understanding measuring, & improving student outcomes
3. **College access and postsecondary success**
   - Supporting students’ social-emotional, mental & physical health
   - Educator workforce & effectiveness
Agenda

• Julia Koppich and Deborah Stipek present:
  • PreK-3 Alignment: Challenges and Opportunities in California

• Jennifer Marroquin
  • How is the issue of ECE alignment playing out in Tulare? What are your reflections on the report through a local lens?

• Debbie Look
  • What are the implications of this report for CA policy? What policy developments are on the horizon?

• Audience Q&A
Today’s speakers

Julia Koppich – President, J. Koppich & Associates
Debbie Look – Principal Consultant, California Assembly
Jennifer Marroquin – Early Childhood Director, Tulare City Schools
Deborah Stipek – Professor, Stanford University & Faculty Director, PACE
PreK-3 Alignment: Challenges and Opportunities in California

Julia E. Koppich, J. Koppich & Associates
Deborah Stipek, Stanford University
With assistance from Molly Ingle Michie, University of Virginia
What is PreK-3 Alignment?

Providing children with a seamless educational experience in which each grade builds on what was learned in the previous grade as children move from preschool through the early elementary grades

• Aligned curriculum, standards and assessments
• Aligned (but developmentally adjusted) teaching methods and classroom norms
• Aligned family involvement and support
Study Methodology

Phone interviews in 25 districts
- 7 superintendents
- 4 deputy or assistant superintendents
- 20 preK/early learning directors
- 1 chief administrative officer

Size and Geographic Diversity:

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<td>4 Bay Area</td>
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<td>8 Southern California</td>
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Findings

• One-third of the study districts not engaged at all in alignment efforts; others engaged to varying degrees

• Divergent beliefs among district leaders about role and purpose of preK affects alignment efforts

• In study districts, elementary principals’ formal responsibility for preK limited to administrative or operational oversight
Findings

• PreK directors who are part of the superintendent’s cabinet have broader opportunities for collaborating with district decision makers and increasing acceptance of preK.

• Cooperation limited by different licensing requirements, salaries and job expectations for preK and elementary teachers.

• Districts’ focus on alignment attenuated by inconsistent program regulations, multiple funding streams, and competition for scarce state dollars.
Approaches to Alignment

- *Organizational* — Early Learning Director involved in district decision making
- *Curriculum* — Aligned preK and K curriculum
- *Standards* — Expanding kindergarten standards to be used in preschool
- *Assessment* — Adopting a common assessment for preK and TK
- *Professional development/Collaboration* — Engaging teachers across grades in teacher PD; principal training in ECE
Policy Implications for the State

• Explicitly prioritize alignment and offer districts incentives to engage in this work.

• Add ECE training to administrative credential requirements.

• Bring ECE permit requirements more in line with elementary credential requirements.

• Streamline preK state licensing requirements.
Implications for Districts

• Offer preK directors a significant place in the district’s administrative structure.

• Include preK in deliberations about fiscal priorities.

• Provide elementary principals with early childhood professional development.

• Align curricula and assessments across preK and early elementary grades.

• Ensure preK–3 teachers have regular opportunities to collaborate and participate together in PD.
Panel Discussion

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