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Great Start California:

Advancing the California Department of Education's P-3 Vision

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Executive Summary

The California Department of Education (CDE) has a bold and ambitious vision to transform California’s schools by building a high-quality continuum of learning for children from PreKindergarten through 3rd grade (P-3).

Currently, this vision prioritizes Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) through the rollout of Universal Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and the expansion of a state-funded, targeted PreKindergarten program. In the near-term, the vision includes ensuring the state’s education agencies intentionally create alignment and continuity from UPK through 3rd grade, ensuring that the full continuum is developmentally informed and addresses the diverse needs of children. Then, in the longer-term, the vision will extend to support the state’s education agencies to engage with other state agencies and organizations to increase alignment with the early learning and care (ELC) system and the rest of the K-12 system (grades 4-12).

With philanthropic support, the CDE engaged the National P-3 Center (NP-3C) at the University of Colorado Denver to spearhead a two-year effort both to build the understanding of P-3 approaches among leaders and staff within the CDE and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), and to identify specific strategies that will inform and guide inter-agency collaborations to develop a state-level P-3 strategic plan.

P-3 approaches are more than conceptual ideals or short-term initiatives. They hold the potential to transform children’s classroom experiences, elementary schools, local education agencies (LEAs)/ school districts, and state agencies. P-3 requires administrators, educators, and policymakers to willingly reconsider their existing policies, practices, and mindsets to create aligned and coherent pathways of high-quality, developmentally informed, and inclusive learning opportunities from preschool through 3rd grade. This report aims to activate organizational and system change across

California that will inspire leaders at every level to embrace P-3 as fundamentally different from the status quo and to galvanize new and stronger partnerships among early care and education (ECE) and TK-12 systems.

Part One of this report reviews key features of P-3 approaches, drawing from the National P-3 Center’s expertise and experience working with states, school districts, and communities across the country. The content was shared with CDE and CTC leaders and staff over a series of meetings and discussions over the two-year period. The purpose behind this content is to increase shared understanding of and commitment to P-3 within key state education agencies.

Part Two outlines a comprehensive list of state-level policy reform strategies that can serve as a springboard for ongoing deliberation and refinement in California. Guidance is provided at different levels of magnitude – “core elements,” or the big, bold policy and funding efforts that appear in the literature; “high-leverage” strategies that may be more readily adoptable, but are still ambitious; and strategies from “agency experts” that include near- and long-term possibilities to change how state agencies work and how they engage with the field.

The boldest policy reforms include:

- **Voluntary, full-school-day PreKindergarten** is provided for all 3- and 4-year-old children.
- **Full-school-day Kindergarten** is required for all children.

- **All teachers have at least a bachelor’s degree** with relevant specialized training; and all teachers’ preparation and certification are equivalent across PreK-3rd grade.
- **Principal licensure** (and, therefore, principal preparation programs) includes explicit focus on child development, and teaching and learning for young children, PreK-3rd grade.
- **Class size and student-teacher ratios** across PreK-3rd grade allow each child to receive individual attention.
- Reforms **address structural inequalities** that have held back children, especially Black, Latinx, American Indian, and Native Alaskan children.

The high-leverage strategies that may have an outsized effect in accelerating California’s momentum on P-3 reform include:

- **Invest in internal agency capacity and expertise dedicated to P-3** within the CDE and CTC, including integrating staff with PreK/TK expertise across agency branches.
- **Develop a state-level “P-3 Ready School” definition and framework** and support school district adoption of “P-3 Ready School” status that emphasizes inclusive, high-quality UPK-3rd grade elementary schools, classrooms, and other facilities.
- Build on the current momentum of the PK-3 ECE Specialist Instruction Credential by **ensuring similar content is infused into the state’s Multiple Subject Instruction Credential and the Administrative Services Credential**, so that all educators and administrators across UPK-3rd grade hold specialized knowledge about young children’s learning and development.
- **Provide innovation grants to school districts, with specific guidance on UPK-3rd grade implementation at the local level.** Investing in local capacity will truly transform children’s day-to-day learning opportunities.
- To set visionary goals related to the short-, interim-, and long-term inputs and outcomes of P-3 approaches, **ensure Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) templates and the California School Dashboard include specific attention to both UPK and TK-3 strategies.**

Finally, this report also includes comprehensive, detailed, and actionable P-3 policy opportunities that fall within three categories of effort that align with the goals in California’s *Master Plan for Early Learning and Care*:

- **Build access to a continuum of inclusive, high-quality P-3 learning.** A continuum of high-quality P-3 learning opportunities provides equitable access to UPK coupled with developmentally informed learning environments and instructional coherence from UPK through 3rd grade.
- **Support a workforce that specializes in P-3.** High-quality instruction and effective learning experiences across the UPK – 3rd grade continuum rely on administrators and teachers who dedicate themselves to creating organizational structures and classroom cultures that engage and support all young children and are aligned across grades.
- **Focus on durable systems to ensure sustainability.** To ensure P-3 is more than a short-lived initiative, it is essential to implement mechanisms, resources, and structures that reflect, support, and sustain a shared vision, collaborative relationships, and mutual accountabilities across UPK and TK-12.

The NP-3C worked with leaders and staff from CDE and CTC to identify the state-level opportunities that can deepen and expand on California’s significant P-3 progress. As the commitment to P-3 expands across the state, the strategies we present in this report can be refined and extended as leaders from additional state agencies and state-local partnerships innovate to build and enact a comprehensive P-3 vision for the state of California.



Introduction

The California Department of Education (CDE) has a bold and ambitious vision to transform California’s schools by building a high-quality continuum of learning for children from PreKindergarten through 3rd grade (P-3). Currently, this vision prioritizes Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) through the rollout of Universal Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and the expansion of a state-funded, targeted PreKindergarten program.

In the near-term, the vision includes ensuring the state’s education agencies – CDE and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) – intentionally create alignment and continuity from UPK through 3rd grade, ensuring that the full continuum is developmentally informed and addresses the diverse needs of children. Then, in the longer-term, the vision will extend to support the CDE and CTC to engage with other state agencies and organizations to increase alignment with the early learning and care (ELC) system and the rest of the K-12 system (grades 4-12).

With philanthropic support, the CDE engaged the National P-3 Center (NP-3C) at the University of Colorado Denver to spearhead a two-year effort both to build the understanding of P-3 approaches among leaders and staff within the CDE and the CTC, and to identify specific strategies that will inform and guide inter-agency collaborations to develop a state-level P-3 strategic plan in the future (see Appendix A for an overview of the process). This report is structured in two parts:

Part One reviews key features of P-3 approaches, drawing from NP-3C’s expertise and experience working with states, school districts, and communities across the country. This content was shared with and discussed among CDE and CTC leaders and staff during a series of meetings over the two-year period. The purpose behind this content is to increase shared understanding of and commitment to P-3 within and across key state education agencies.

Part Two outlines a comprehensive list of state-level strategies that may serve as a springboard for future strategic planning and action related to P-3 in California. Many of the strategies were generated by the CDE and CTC leaders and staff who engaged in the two-year process with NP-3C. As the commitment to P-3 expands across the state, these strategies can be refined and extended as leaders from additional state agencies, organizations, and state-local partnerships innovate to build and enact a comprehensive P-3 vision for the state of California.

As a whole, this report provides a unique compilation of research-based perspectives on P-3 approaches, as well as innovative ideas that will deepen California’s systemic engagement and investment in early learning and the early grades. This work also highlights how California continues to be a leader and a lead learner across the country in visionary system change on behalf of young children and their families.

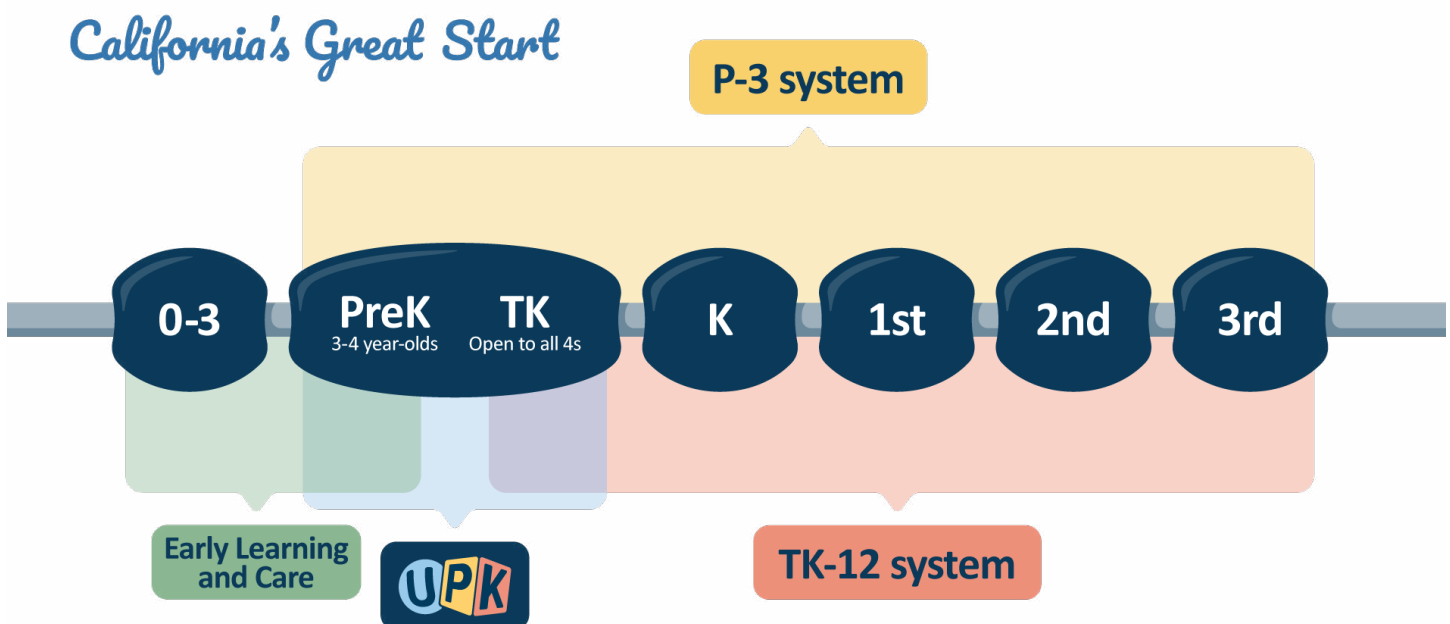


Background and California Context

In 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom released California’s Master Plan for Early Learning and Care, a plan for an ambitious transformation of the system that serves children from birth through age five and their families. Among other priorities, the Master Plan recommended that California establish one unified system of state-funded preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds that includes both school districts/local education agencies (LEAs) and community-based preschool programs. Such a vision for Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) requires that public schools be equipped both to deliver high-quality PreKindergarten themselves and to be collaborative partners with the early care and education (ECE) system that includes the federal Head Start program, subsidized programs that operate a preschool learning experience and are operated by community-based organizations (including family child care), and private preschool programs.

Building on this ambitious goal of UPK, California has created a vision for P-3, called Great Start California, that calls for improving the quality and coherence of learning opportunities provided to children from age three through 3rd grade. Recent legislative changes in California – including the transfer of many subsidized child care programs from the California Department of Education (CDE) to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), expansion of UPK under the authority of CDE, and the requirement that any LEA offering Kindergarten also offer Transitional Kindergarten by 2025 – provide an unprecedented opportunity for the state to prioritize P-3 alignment. Doing so requires the state’s education agencies to embrace PreK, integrate TK, and ensure coherence across the full continuum. P-3 approaches ensure the full grade span (see Figure 1), UPK through 3rd grade, reflects the science of young children’s learning and development.

FIGURE 1: GREAT START CALIFORNIA’S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Because the CDE is charged with leading UPK roll-out and implementation, this P-3 report focuses on California’s education agencies, CDE and CTC. This report encourages these agencies to consider how they create the conditions for school districts/LEAs to be respectful and respected partners alongside community-based PreKindergarten programs and Head Start in the state’s UPK efforts.

This report also encourages CDE and CTC to consider how they improve alignment of policies and practices across UPK and K-12 by increasing alignment within and across branches of their agencies, so that UPK and K-3 are guided by coherent policies that increase the quality of

progressive learning experiences, cultural and racial affirmation, and inclusivity of children’s learning opportunities. For example, currently within CDE, responsibilities for UPK are led by the Opportunities for All Branch (OFAB), while responsibilities for K-3 are split across different branches and divisions – including OFAB; the Instruction, Measurement, and Administration Branch (IMAB); the Information and Technology Branch; the Student Support Services Branch; and the Student Achievement Branch. Ultimately, the vision is for the state and, in turn, school districts to seamlessly organize and deliver TK through 3rd grade, while also partnering to deliver PreK to 3-year-olds.

Future Work: EXPANDING THE STATE’S P-3 VISION

Over time, as California’s P-3 work becomes more established and consistent, the P-3 vision will need to broaden, bringing in additional state agencies and extending alignment to both younger and older children. To expand the state’s alignment vision to be one of prenatal through 3rd grade, it will be important to bring together the current P-3 vision with state policy reforms outlined in the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care that include not only CDE and CTC, but also CDSS and other state entities. Doing so will more deeply

explore the role of partnerships among UPK’s mixed-delivery partners, and also consider ways to create stronger alignment between the state’s early learning and care (ELC) system, UPK, and TK-12 school districts. In future years, as the P-3 strategy expands to include additional state agencies and organizations, California’s education agencies will be trusted partners who value and support developmentally informed efforts across the prenatal through 3rd grade continuum and into the higher grades.

A Note on Terminology

Throughout this report, a variety of terms are used to reference alignment efforts:

- **P-3** = the over-arching term for comprehensive alignment between systems that serve children birth to age 5 and PreK-12 systems. This term is used primarily when referencing research, non-California-specific efforts, or to reference the long-term vision in California.
- **UPK-3rd Grade** = the term used to reference California’s current and near-term efforts to leverage roll-out of UPK for 3- and 4-year-olds in alignment with K-3.
- **TK-3rd Grade** = the term used to reference the grade levels legislatively required to be offered by school districts by 2025 in California.

In addition to these terms, a full listing of acronyms used in this report can be found in Appendix B.

PART ONE:

Making the Case for P-3

The promise of “school readiness” and reduced 3rd grade achievement gaps are often the primary motivating factors behind P-3 approaches,¹ and are also compelling rationales for California’s current P-3 vision.

Notably, the current roll-out and implementation of UPK provides an unprecedented opportunity in California to make certain that the promise of PreK can be delivered by also ensuring children’s subsequent education experiences are designed and implemented in ways that build on what children learn in PreK and that reflect the science of learning and development.

California’s current focus on UPK through 3rd grade requires engagement and investment from CDE and CTC, as they are the state education agencies most directly responsible for the policies that support school districts, school administrators, educators, and other staff. To sustain P-3 approaches into the future, it is important to ensure that the P-3 vision is not held by a small group of people. To build both philosophical buy-in and constructive reflection on

current practices, NP-3C spent two years meeting with agency leaders and staff in CDE and CTC (see Appendix A for an overview of the process). Our time together was spent discussing the “why, what, and how” of P-3 – why the status quo is inadequate, what P-3 approaches offer, and how they can improve young children’s learning experiences and long-term outcomes.

This part of the report summarizes the research and framing shared with and discussed by CDE and CTC leaders and staff. It explores a multi-faceted and deeper examination of “why P-3 matters,” describes ways in which P-3 approaches shift the status quo, and highlights how state policy and practices influence the quality and continuity of children’s day-to-day, year-after-year learning experiences.

Why P-3?

Giving children a strong start through equitable access to high-quality PreKindergarten programs, then ensuring children’s subsequent education experiences build on what they learned in PreK and also reflect the science of learning and development, are essential reasons to pursue P-3 approaches. While these rationales are compelling, the research behind effective P-3 approaches provides more

nuance and specificity to justify pursuing P-3 approaches.² The following seven rationales build a more robust argument for supporting efforts that build alignment and continuity across the P-3 continuum.

¹ Kauerz, 2019; Reynolds et al., 2006; Ricciardi et al., 2021; Yoshikawa et al., 2013.

² See, for example, Bai et al., 2020; Bailey et al., 2017; Durkin et al., 2022; Reynolds & Temple, 2019.

P-3 prioritizes high-quality PreK for 3- and 4-year-olds.

By definition, P-3 approaches center the “P-part,” or learning opportunities provided to children prior to entering Kindergarten. However, simply providing access to any kind of pre-school program is insufficient. Decades of research from the developmental and education disciplines emphasize that the quality of children’s early education experiences matter greatly. Young students thrive in PreKindergarten when they experience a combination of playful and experiential learning, attention to the explicit development of social-emotional and executive function skills, balanced early literacy approaches, and early math instruction.³ Elevating the science of learning and development in PreKindergarten activates children’s curiosity, creativity, and a growth mindset that helps children engage with academic content that will help them succeed in elementary school and beyond.⁴ Moreover, research shows that high-quality PreK programs are particularly beneficial for multilingual learners,⁵ children who experience historic and systemic racism,⁶ and children with disabilities.⁷

This emphasis on high-quality PreK is important because it addresses a fear that PreK will become “schoolified” when it is managed and delivered by school systems. Ever since the National Education Goals Panel declared in 1990 that “all children will start school ready to learn,” ECE programs have increasingly focused on school readiness. As a result,

in large part, ECE has engaged in measurements of quality traditionally associated with K-12 education – for example, teacher certification, evidence-based curriculum, learning standards, and increased assessment of child outcomes. This has led some to fear that PreK is becoming “schoolified” and may no longer be appropriate for young children.⁸ Perhaps in part as an effort to combat perceived schoolification, some segments of ECE resist current advances in the science of learning and development and provide lower-quality services.⁹ P-3 approaches set a high-quality expectation for all PreK classrooms.



³National Research Council, 2001; Stipek et al., 2017; Yoshikawa et al., 2013.

⁴Darling-Hammond et al., 2020.

⁵Partika et al., 2023.

⁶Fuller et al., 2017.

⁷Sheppard & Moran, 2021.

⁸Bassok, Latham, et al., 2016; Brown, 2013; Justice et al., 2020.

⁹Bassok, Greenberg, et al., 2016.

P-3 POTENTIAL

#2:

P-3 approaches recognize Kindergarten as a pivotal year and emphasize the importance of full-day Kindergarten as a way to support every child, no matter their PreK experience.

California, like many states, does not require school districts to offer full- or extended-day Kindergarten, nor are children required to attend Kindergarten,¹⁰ despite increasing evidence showing the efficacy of full-day Kindergarten in boosting children's learning and academic achievement, especially for children with disabilities, multilingual learners, and other children facing systemic biases.¹¹ At a time when access to PreK is expanding, but children are not required to attend, Kindergarten takes on even greater importance, with more than 90% of 5-year-olds in California enrolled in school.¹²

Kindergarten teachers face the challenge of having classrooms filled with a wide diversity of children, some who attended high-quality PreK and some who did not.¹³ Understandably, with limited time in half-day classes, Kindergarten teachers are likely most concerned with getting non-PreK-attenders "caught up."¹⁴ In practice, this may mean PreK attenders receive similar instruction and content in Kindergarten to what they received in PreK, rather than receiving content and instruction that builds upon their PreK experiences.¹⁵ Full-day Kindergarten allows teachers more time to modify the curriculum to meet young students' needs and interests in ways that reflect the science of learning and development.



¹⁰ Parker et al., 2016.

¹¹ Gottfried & Le, 2016; Hall-Kenyon et al., 2009; Kauerz, 2010.

¹² National Center for Education Statistics, 2023.

¹³ Ehrlich et al., 2022; Helsabeck et al., 2021.

¹⁴ Burchinal et al., 2022.

¹⁵ Coburn et al., 2018; Cohen-Vogel et al., 2021; Justice et al., 2021.

P-3 RATIONALE

#3:

P-3 elevates the science of young children’s learning and development across the primary grades (K-3).

By definition, P-3 approaches also center the “-3” (through 3rd grade) or K-3 learning opportunities. P-3 approaches assume one or two years of high-quality PreK need to be followed by consecutive years of high-quality learning opportunities in the early elementary grades.¹⁶ Just as in PreK, the science of learning and development are foundational to the definition of high quality in the primary grades. This includes attention to the developmental progression of content across grade levels, as well as coherence of pedagogical approaches so children have a clear understanding of and comfort with “being in school.”

Comprehensive P-3 approaches intentionally explore ways the K-3 grades need to change in order to balance academic and social-emotional development, spark children’s natural curiosity, and meaningfully engage families in their children’s learning. Just as any preschool program will not do, nor will the status quo of many K-3 efforts. Reforming K-3 requires more than focusing on teachers’ classroom practices, but also attending to how elementary school administrators and educators are trained and supported;¹⁷ cross-grade alignment of instructional supports – standards, curricula, assessments, and professional learning;¹⁸ and ensuring existing schoolwide reforms like Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) are adequately understood, resourced, and implemented.¹⁹



¹⁶Pearman et al., 2020; Stipek et al., 2017; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2019; Vitiello et al., 2020.

¹⁷Kauerz et al., 2021; Koppich & Stipek, 2020; National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators, 2008; Nicholson et al., 2018.

¹⁸Drummond et al., 2016; Koppich & Stipek, 2020; Kotas et al., 2020; Stipek et al., 2017.

¹⁹Farkas, 2020; Wright & Steed, 2021.

P-3 approaches prioritize transitions as fundamental opportunities to increase continuity between settings and grade levels.

More than simply focusing on PreK and K-3 as distinct chunks of time, P-3 approaches provide explicit attention to creating smooth transitions from setting-to-setting, classroom-to-classroom, year-to-year. The transition to kindergarten is often the most challenging passage for children, as it traditionally involves the move from an ECE setting into a public school, and requires joint buy-in and collaboration between ECE and K-12 systems that often have variable approaches to supporting children's kindergarten. The goals, demands, and classroom structures in public schools are often different than those in home- or community-based preschool and child care settings.²⁰

Traditionally, transitions are more difficult for children with disabilities, multilingual learners, children in immigrant families, and children experiencing historic and systemic racism.²¹ As TK becomes implemented universally by school districts across California, attention to transitions from PreK to TK, TK to Kindergarten, and Kindergarten to 1st grade will be increasingly important. Of note, year-to-year transitions after 1st grade are also important.

Effective transitions include more than a set of one-time activities provided to children and their families (e.g., visits to a Kindergarten classroom). Meaningful attention to transitions put in place a series of practices and policies that

ensure families have easy access to information and enrollment processes, children experience instructional continuity, educators across grade levels spend time together, and systems share data that inform improvement across the PreK-3rd grade continuum.²²



²⁰Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000; Vitiello, Pianta, et al., 2020.

²¹Iruka et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2021; Sands & Meadan, 2022.

²²Ehrlich et al., 2021; Kauerz & Schaper, 2021; Kauerz et al., 2021; Kauerz & Coffman, 2019; Vitiello, 2020.

SHARED VISION/VALUES

P-3 RATIONALE

#5:

P-3 approaches rely on meaningful collaborations between leaders in ECE and K-3 to build a shared vision that is grounded in the science of learning and development, elevates equity, and prioritizes coherence.

Because of the abundance of research and advocacy over the past 30 years related to understanding brain development and the importance of high-quality early learning, many P-3 reform efforts are anchored in expanding access to and increasing the quality of children’s PreK experiences. There has been much less emphasis on K-3 reform, with the notable exception of the growing attention to science-based reading instruction in the early grades. While both are grounded in science, there often is little common ground. Indeed, the gaps and differences between the vision of PreK reforms and K-3 reforms has created tensions and a splintered vision for how to best support young learners.²³ Different authors have referred to the bridging of ECE and K-12 as working in “different galaxies”²⁴ or “colliding worlds.”²⁵

P-3 creates opportunities for professionals in both ECE and K-12 who are dedicated to advancing children’s well-being to come together and find common ground in the science of learning and development.²⁶ P-3 approaches recognize that the work cannot be led from just one side of the P-3 continuum – the work requires equal investment and engagement from the “P-part” and the K-3 part.

Fundamentally, the creation of shared vision and values relies on creating opportunities for people – leaders, administrators, educators, and staff – to engage in joint professional learning, planning, and activities to cultivate mutual respect, shared understanding of the science behind young children’s learning and development, and commitment to creating alignment and coherence across the P-3 continuum.²⁷



²³ Little & Gragson, 2023; Whitaker et al., 2022.

²⁴ Takanishi, 2016.

²⁵ McCabe & Sipple, 2011.

²⁶ Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Kauerz, 2019; Koppich & Stipek, 2020.

²⁷ Edwards, 2012; Kauerz, 2019; Koppich & Stipek, 2020; Reynolds et al., 2017; Valentino & Stipek, 2016.

REDUCE POLICY SILOS

P-3 RATIONALE

#6:

P-3 approaches recognize and strive to address structural silos (policies and budgets) within state agencies.

Aligned vision and values alone are inadequate to meaningfully improve the coherence of children's day-to-day learning opportunities. Siloed policies also can get in the way of school districts', elementary schools', and communities' P-3 alignment efforts.²⁸ The reality in most states is that PreKindergarten policy and K-3 policy are governed by different entities – sometimes across different branches or divisions within one agency (as in California); sometimes across multiple agencies. For example, one set of learning standards apply to PreK, another to K-12. One set of educator/administrator qualifications apply to PreK; another to K-12. One type of student assessments is used in PreK; another in K-12. Class size limits and student:teacher ratios can be vastly different between PreK and K-3. While PreK is often funded through a mix of discretionary and mandatory funds, K-12 funding is constitutionally guaranteed. While K-12 reforms such as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) are widespread, they often are implemented only in the K-3 grades, leaving out PreK.²⁹

Practically and fiscally, structural silos reflect duplicative, costly redundancy of roles. Further, the silos can place undue burden on local administrators and families who are responsible for navigating multiple funding formulas, regulatory environments, and accountability systems. Policy silos require attention from not only state agency leaders, but also state legislators, boards of education and, often, voters. While California is making notable progress addressing some of these divides, others remain to be prioritized.



²⁸Kauerz, 2018; Koppich & Stipek, 2020; Rauch Griffard et al., 2022; Weisenfeld et al., 2020.

²⁹Wackerle-Hollman et al., 2021.

P-3 centers equity by recognizing and addressing systemic disadvantages that affect children.

Multiple studies provide evidence of disparities in opportunities and outcomes for young children that correlate with race, family socio-economic status, disability, immigration status, and home language.³⁰ For example, data suggest that children who are multilingual learners (MLL) in California enroll in PreKindergarten at lower rates than their non-MLL peers. These data point to the pressing need for California's UPK programs to attend to MLLs' transition from home-based to school-based settings and lift up the linguistic and cultural assets that MLL children bring to their learning. Moving up into the early grades, California school discipline data from the 2016-2017 school year show that the highest racial disparity by grade occurred in K-3 and that Black boys were 5.6 times more likely to be suspended than the statewide average.³¹ Schoolwide, cross-grade reforms often are implemented without explicit attention to how they meaningfully include marginalized student groups such as children with disabilities, children who experience racial bias and discrimination, and multilingual learners.³²

To meaningfully address opportunity and achievement gaps, educators need to believe that all children can learn and excel, then reform their policies and practices in accordance.³³ Some students may need more time (e.g., full-day versus half-day PreK; time spent on specific content), effective teachers, or access to a different array of

services or instructional strategies. In California, the CDE has prioritized attention to inclusionary practices for children with disabilities, providing adequate access to bilingual learning opportunities for MLLs, and reducing the disproportionate use of harsh or excessive discipline with children who experience systemic racism. Because P-3 approaches attend to disparities in child outcomes and the quality of learning opportunities provided, they are anchored by decisions that center equity.



³⁰ Meek, Blevins, Catherine, & Alexander, 2020.

³¹ Meek et al., 2020, pg. 5.

³² Cipriano et al., 2021.

³³ Kauerz, Ballard, et al., 2021.

What P-3 Looks Like

P-3 approaches are more than conceptual ideals or short-term initiatives. They hold the potential to transform children’s classroom experiences, elementary schools, school districts/LEAs, and state agencies. P-3 requires educators, administrators, and policymakers to willingly reconsider their existing policies, practices, and mindsets to create aligned and coherent pathways of high-quality, developmentally informed, and inclusive learning opportunities from preschool through 3rd grade. This report aims to activate organizational and system change across California that will inspire leaders at every level to embrace P-3 as fundamentally different from the status quo and to galvanize new and stronger partnerships among ECE and TK-12 systems. To illustrate the possibilities, the next sections of this report describe how P-3 might look at school, district, and state levels.

FROM THE **BOOTS-ON-THE-GROUND** LEVEL:

Elementary Schools that Embrace P-3

Schools that have adopted a P-3 approach prioritize early learning and create greater continuity with the early grades. In great elementary schools, the school culture, administrators, educators, and staff consistently recognize “PreK-3rd grade” as a unique time period in children’s lives.³⁴ Importantly, such elementary schools also recognize that a child’s education does not begin and end at the school door, but that families and community-based partners are essential to children’s long-term success. P-3 schools support young learners by establishing and valuing authentic and affirming relationships with minoritized and marginalized families and communities. These relationships extend to families and guardians for which English is not their home language, immigrant families, American Indian and Alaska Native families, families that experience systemic racism, and families that work non-traditional schedules. P-3 approaches honor and build the capacity of all families.

In schools that adopt a P-3 approach, instruction is grounded in the science of young children’s learning and development. Engaged, playful learning is valued as an essential aspect of instruction. P-3-focused administrators hire educators not only

in PreK/TK but also across K-3 who specialize in early learning. Administrators actively support professional learning and coaching that span grade levels, not only to improve instructional coherence but also to build a sense of collective efficacy among educators so they feel like they are working together toward common goals. As part of the ongoing process of reflection and continuous improvement, P-3 schools also attend to the social-emotional well-being of staff and students, with a critical eye toward advancing equity.

P-3 schools also create the structural conditions that facilitate continuity. School schedules are designed with the flexibility to be responsive to young learners and with sufficient time for children to engage in hands-on learning. Schedules are designed with children’s physical well-being in mind, with adequate time for meals, recess, and other opportunities for gross motor play. Staffing structures – class size, student:teacher ratios, and the assignment of support staff – reflect the unique developmental trajectories of young learners. This includes providing staffing that supports dual language instruction and inclusive learning environments.

³⁴ Kauerz, Ballard, et al., 2021.

FROM THE 10,000-FOOT LEVEL:

School Districts/LEAs that Embrace P-3

Case studies of successful P-3 approaches – efforts that resulted in measurable organizational change and improved student outcomes – highlight that school districts play essential roles.³⁵ School districts hold the keys to improving the quality of P-3 at scale, ensuring alignment happens in all schools, not just one or two. Districts dedicated to P-3 approaches bring systemwide attention to content, instructional practices, and learning environments across grade levels that are informed by the science of learning and development. LEAs also establish the culture, expectations, and resources to meaningfully engage families and community-based ECE programs. District leaders promote child and family success by enhancing access to community resources and programs, promoting cross-sector collaboration, and working with state and national leaders to support community goals.

Districts that adopt P-3 approaches invest in specialized human capital, hiring elementary administrators and PreK-3rd grade educators who have expertise in child development and early education. In some instances, ensuring sufficient leadership capacity means hiring a team with P-3 background knowledge and experience but, more often, it means supporting influential leaders to gain new or enhanced knowledge about P-3 approaches.

School districts invest in P-3 progress by dedicating general operating resources to their P-3 priorities. Resources support cross-grade professional learning related to instructional coherence, staffing routines and structures that facilitate collaboration between UPK and K-3 teachers, enhancement of facilities, and aligned data systems. To accomplish this, districts may blend federal, state, and local resources to allocate to P-3 priorities.

FROM THE 50,000-FOOT LEVEL:

State-level Systems and Structures that Embrace P-3

At the state level, P-3 approaches are supported when there are systems and structures in place that reinforce a culture of collaboration both across divisions within a single agency, as well as across state agencies. This view starts with state-level leaders who believe in early education and see it as their responsibility to ensure that the very youngest students and their families are valued and reflected in policy decisions. It often requires leaders who hold responsibility for traditional K-12 efforts to be willing to see their work in new ways and to engage in collaborative visioning and strategic planning that establishes a new paradigm and, likely, new structures that influence both early education

and the early grades. It also requires leaders who hold responsibility for ECE efforts to embrace meaningful collaboration and partnership in the face of past and present divisions. P-3 activities will only be universally, sustainably, and equitably delivered when there is a system of policies and strategies enacted across state and local agencies and organizations. Although much P-3 innovation is spawned at the local level, state policy and budgets hold power both to influence the prioritization of alignment between early learning and the early grades, and to provide guidance and resources to enable local communities' reform efforts.

This first part of the report provided comprehensive, visionary framing for P-3 that includes the need to attend to building shared vision and values among families, educators, administrators, and policymakers. It also highlighted the need to reform laws, rules, and regulatory guidance in order to achieve alignment and coherence. We turn to these policy changes in the next part of this report.

³⁵ Bardige et al., 2018; Bornfreund & Loewenberg, 2018; Coburn et al., 2018; Marietta, 2010a, 2010b; Marietta & Brookover, 2011; Marietta & Marietta, 2013a, 2013b; Williams & Garcia, 2015.

PART TWO:

Strategic Guidance for California's Great Start P-3 Vision

Part Two of this report turns to providing state-level policy reform strategies that can serve as a springboard for ongoing deliberation and refinement in California. The strategies below are of different magnitude, with varying sets of decisionmakers who would need to be engaged for their enactment.

The first set of strategies — core elements — were culled from the literature and have been widely used to frame P-3 approaches across the country. The second set of strategies — high leverage — were generated by NP-3C staff after reviewing the full scope of our two-year engagement in this project (see Appendix A for a full description). The third set of strategies — agency experts — reflect the voices and perspectives of the leaders and staff from CDE and CTC who, after engaging with the content summarized in Part One of this report, were asked to consider ways that they might imagine improving state-level support for P-3.

As described in Part One of this report, effective P-3 approaches require attention *both* to building shared vision and values among people *and* to reforming laws, rules, or regulatory guidance. We use a broad understanding of policy change throughout the following sections. Throughout the remainder of this report, some strategies are regulatory in nature, suggesting actions to amend or develop formal policy. Other strategies are normative or relational policy mechanisms, suggesting actions to increase time, support, and/or processes that bring together people and projects to collaborate around aligned vision and practices. The hope is that the comprehensive nature of the possibilities outlined here will inspire additional reflection, collaboration, and action across California.



THE CORE ELEMENTS OF P-3 APPROACHES

Scholars and practitioners alike have identified essential state-level policies that create the fundamental structure for P-3 approaches.³⁶ These include:

- **Voluntary, full-school-day PreKindergarten** is provided for all 3- and 4-year-old children.
- **Full-school-day Kindergarten** is required for all children.
- **All teachers have at least a bachelor's degree** with relevant specialized training; and all teachers' preparation and certification are equivalent across PreK-3rd grade.
- **Principal licensure** (and, therefore, principal preparation programs) includes explicit focus on child development, and teaching and learning for young children, PreK-3rd grade.
- **Class size and student-teacher ratios** across PreK-3rd grade allow each child to receive individual attention.
- Reforms **address structural inequalities** that have held back children, especially Black, Latinx, American Indian, and Native Alaskan children.

While no state in the United States has all of these policies in place, these elements frame a long-term vision for P-3 in California. For some elements, California is making impressive progress. For other elements, the reforms may currently be out-of-reach for fiscal, political, or other reasons. Nonetheless, these elements are long-term aspirations, the realization of which will require leadership, funding, and buy-in from legislative and executive branches of government.



³⁶ Children's Equity Project & Bipartisan Policy Center, 2020; Graves, 2006; Kauerz, 2019; Kauerz & Coffman, 2019; Meet et al., 2020; Reynolds et al., 2006; Takanishi, 2016.

HIGH-LEVERAGE P-3 STRATEGIES

Over the past two years, the National P-3 Center has had the privilege to engage with many state and local leaders about California’s P-3 vision and plans. We have been in conversations where there is much agreement among those in the room, and also in conversations where little agreement exists. We also work directly with researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in other states. This positionality and perspective gives us the ability to elevate five cross-cutting strategies that may have outsized effect in accelerating California’s momentum on P-3 reform:

- 1 Invest in internal agency capacity and expertise dedicated to P-3** within the CDE and CTC, including integrating staff with PreK/TK expertise across agency branches. Effectively implementing this strategy will require ongoing, intentional shared professional learning for agency leaders and staff to deepen their understanding of how to support alignment and continuity across a mixed-delivery UPK program and TK-12.
- 2 Develop a state-level “P-3 Ready School” definition and framework** and support school district adoption of “P-3 Ready School” status that emphasizes inclusive, high-quality UPK-3rd grade elementary schools, classrooms, and other facilities. This strategy would shift the burden of “readiness” from young children to the schools and districts that serve them. The definition of a “P-3 Ready School” should include explicit attention to meaningful collaboration with community-based PreK programs, and authentic and respectful engagement with families and community partners. The strategy should also center equity, ensuring schools recognize and strive to mitigate the effects of historical and systemic biases against sub-populations of children.
- 3 Build on the current momentum of the PK-3 ECE Specialist Instruction Credential by ensuring similar content is infused into the state’s Multiple Subject Instruction Credential and the Administrative Services Credential** for elementary principals. Specifically, all administrators and educators who work with children, UPK-3rd grade, will benefit from receiving up-to-date content on child development; holistic attention to the integration of children’s domains of development (e.g., academic; social-emotional; physical; and approaches to learning); pedagogical approaches most effective for young learners; and models of continuous improvement that center equity.
- 4 Provide innovation grants to school districts, with specific guidance on UPK-3rd grade implementation at the local level.** In particular, these grants should prioritize ways to ensure districts and schools meaningfully engage with families and community partners; create continuity and alignment across the district’s UPK and K-3 silos; and seek ways to prioritize inclusion and continuity of learning experiences for multilingual learners, children with disabilities, and children experiencing historic and systemic bias. These grants should be made available to all LEAs, regardless of size.
- 5 To set visionary goals related to the short-, interim-, and long-term inputs and outcomes of P-3 approaches, ensure Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) templates and the California School Dashboard include specific attention to both UPK and TK-3 strategies,** with particular focus on strengths-based progress (e.g., the number of PreK-3rd grade teachers holding the specialized credential).

These strategies – of state agency staff capacity, ensuring schools and districts are organized to support UPK-3rd at scale, and identifying continuous improvement metrics – have echoes throughout the next robust set of strategies.

STRATEGIES FROM AGENCY EXPERTS

As a reminder, the goals behind California’s engagement with NP-3C were both to build the understanding of P-3 approaches among leaders and staff within the CDE and CTC, and to identify specific strategies that will inform and guide inter-agency collaborations to develop a state-level P-3 strategic plan. The remainder of this report blends the two goals, providing a robust list of strategies generated during collaborative discussions with California leaders throughout our two-year engagement. During this process, participants learned about, reflected on, and elevated near- and long-term strategies to advance P-3 in California.

To organize the collaborative process, NP-3C and CDE leadership identified three overarching pillars that represent categories of P-3 policy opportunities and align with the goals in the *Master Plan for Early Learning and Care*:

PILLAR #1

Build access to a continuum of inclusive, high-quality P-3 learning.

A continuum of high-quality P-3 learning opportunities provides equitable access to UPK coupled with developmentally informed learning environments and instructional coherence from UPK through 3rd grade.

PILLAR #2

Support a workforce that specializes in P-3.

High-quality instruction and effective learning experiences across the UPK-3rd grade continuum rely on administrators and teachers who dedicate themselves to creating organizational structures and classroom cultures that engage and support all young children and are aligned across grades.

PILLAR #3

Focus on durable systems to ensure sustainability.

To ensure P-3 is more than a short-lived initiative, it is essential to implement mechanisms, resources, and structures that reflect, support, and sustain a shared vision, collaborative relationships, and mutual accountabilities across UPK and TK-12.

Throughout the entire collaborative process, we highlighted CDE’s high priority on equity. Access to an aligned continuum of inclusive, high-quality learning that begins in UPK and extends through 3rd grade is important for all children, but particularly important to children with disabilities, multilingual learners, and children who experience racial disparities, especially related to harsh and exclusionary discipline.

PILLAR #1

Build access to a continuum of inclusive, high-quality P-3 learning.

GOAL

A continuum of high-quality P-3 learning opportunities provides equitable access to UPK coupled with developmentally informed learning environments and instructional coherence from UPK through 3rd grade.

The magic of P-3 approaches is in their focus on the *continuum* of learning, not grade-by-grade reforms. This pillar of strategies leverages California’s recent investments to expand UPK, while also considering opportunities for traditional K-12 policy levers to embrace the UPK-3rd grade continuum in new ways. As before, for some of these, California is making notable progress already. The following three policy areas delineate actions that California consider as it designs or revises policies to influence the UPK-3rd grade continuum:

1. Access to a continuum of high-quality early learning, UPK-3rd grade
2. School and program level standards, supports, and continuous improvement
3. Instructional resources and supports - aligned learning standards, curriculum, and assessment

STATE POLICY AREA 1:

Access to a continuum of high-quality early learning, UPK-3rd grade

California’s recent expansion of UPK is the foundation for a comprehensive P-3 approach. As the state expands access to UPK across the state, it will be important to strive to not reenforce or create a silo in which UPK is separated from the K-3 grades.

1.1.1

OBJECTIVE:

Develop a P-3 toolkit for LEAs administering UPK that provides consistent information about curriculum resources, standards, assessment, and other instructional materials across the UPK-3rd grade continuum.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

- a. Work with county offices of education (COEs) and school districts to identify the state-level documents (e.g., curriculum frameworks, standards) that inform school-level decisions. Review identified documents to determine where alignment, duplication, and gaps exist.
- b. Establish a durable team with representation from all relevant CDE branches to: (1) identify rules, regulations, guidance, or expectations that inform P-3, (2) identify inconsistencies and gaps, and (3) work to create better alignment. Ensure that families, educators, and community partners have systematic and meaningful ways to communicate with the state team.

1.1.2

OBJECTIVE:

Develop a transitions toolkit that can be adopted and adapted by LEAs and ECE partners, providing rationales for why transitions are important, and specific strategies to strengthen transitions.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

- a. Inventory promising practices from LEAs' current enrollment processes and transitions practices (e.g., conduct survey, focus groups); adapt or adopt these for inclusion in the toolkit.
- b. Include exemplar enrollment and transitions practices/forms within CSPP/TK proposals and guidance.
- c. Ensure transition processes are responsive to the diversity of children and families within local communities and specifically support families' and communities' linguistic, cultural, racial, and sociodemographic diversity.

1.1.3

OBJECTIVE:

Expand equitable access to a high-quality UPK-3rd grade continuum of learning for *children who are multilingual learners* (MLLs).

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

- a. Collect, and then make available, data about the location of multilingual and dual language programs that provide consecutive years of instruction UPK-3rd grade throughout the state to support family and community decisions on enrollment and access.
- b. Update California's *English Learner Roadmap* to expand its inclusion of young children with explicit content related to UPK, TK, and UPK-3rd grade.
- c. Engage LEA superintendents to use the *English Learner Roadmap* in district planning efforts.
- d. Examine California's reimbursement rates and structure to maximize funding support for MLLs in CSPP (e.g., implement stackable adjustment factors that reflect the true cost of supporting MLLs).

1.1.4

OBJECTIVE:

Expand equitable access to a high-quality UPK-3rd grade continuum of learning for *children with disabilities*.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

- a. Identify the full range of CDE's teaching and learning funding that supports children with disabilities (e.g., IEEEEP grant, SIP, and Embedded Instruction grant) to facilitate coherence in inclusion supports.
- b. Expand the Embedded Instruction grant that promotes an evidence-based multi-component approach for planning, implementing, and evaluating instruction and create connections to other state funding (e.g., IEEEEP).
- c. Conduct a review of UPK policies and practices to ensure children with disabilities are identified early and mixed-delivery UPK providers are supported to meaningfully include all children (e.g., facilities, transitions guidance).
- d. Create training and technical assistance for CSPP related to inclusionary requirements.
- e. Examine California's reimbursement rates and structure to maximize funding support for children with disabilities in CSPP (e.g., implementing stackable adjustment factors that reflect the true cost of care).

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

1.1.5

OBJECTIVE:

Expand equitable access to a high-quality UPK-3rd grade continuum of learning for *children from historically disadvantaged and marginalized racial and ethnic backgrounds* who are likely to experience bias, racism, and exclusionary discipline.

- a. Expand California’s no-exclusionary-practices policy (banning suspensions and expulsions) as a condition of UPK, as these practices disproportionately affect children of color and children with disabilities.
- b. Encourage LEAs to engage in continuous improvement efforts that are based on current, local data associated with behavioral supports and interventions. Encourage LEAs to improve inclusive practices for children and their families from marginalized racial and ethnic backgrounds.
- c. Develop guidance on the implementation of restorative justice principles in UPK-3rd grade settings.
- d. Ensure all elementary administrators and UPK-3rd grade educators have access to professional learning on anti-racist and anti-bias practices, as well as classroom management and effective strategies for addressing the needs of children who have been suspended or expelled.
- e. Support LEAs in establishing positive relationships with communities, including the expansion of community schools.



STATE POLICY AREA 2:

School and Program Level Standards, Supports, and Continuous Improvement

The CDE provides both mandatory and voluntary standards, guidance, and supports that influence how LEAs implement high-quality, coherent learning opportunities. Strategic attention to how these align with one another and value UPK-3rd grade will strengthen California's P-3 efforts.

<p>1.2.1 OBJECTIVE: Develop and support LEA adoption of a “P-3 Ready School” definition and framework that prioritizes high-quality and inclusive UPK-3rd grade classrooms, schools, and meaningful engagement with communities.</p>	<p>IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Establish metrics that define a “P-3 Ready School.” Include indicators related to elementary school culture/climate, administrative leadership, educator teamwork, and community engagement. Indicators should also include family engagement and guidelines for nutrition/mealtime and extended learning.b. Incentivize or provide funding for LEAs and schools to adopt Ready Schools efforts (e.g., revised LCAP criteria or grants), such as adding support personnel, building new systems for collaboration, developing home-school partnerships, and offering cross-grade professional learning in collaboration with community ECE programs.c. Prioritize the use of data in school/program-based continuous improvement efforts, particularly data related to children and families who are MLLs, children with disabilities, and children from historically disadvantaged backgrounds.
<p>1.2.2 OBJECTIVE: Develop and support LEA adoption of multi-tiered frameworks that address children’s social, emotional, and academic development. Ensure that frameworks used by elementary schools are explicitly inclusive of UPK.</p>	<p>IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Encourage LEAs and CSPPs to publish information about their school/program-wide approaches to support social and emotional development (e.g., Pyramid Model, MTSS) through the LCAP and family-facing outlets such as websites.b. Provide guidance to LEAs on the ways in which traditional K-12 approaches to address trauma and social and emotional wellbeing can be implemented to be appropriate for UPK-3rd grade students and educators.c. Support greater collaboration among special educators and general educators when schools implement MTSS.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

1.2.3

OBJECTIVE:

Identify and align standards for structural aspects of classroom quality (e.g., class size; student:teacher ratios) and process quality (e.g., interactions, opportunities for engaging in active learning) for UPK-3rd grade classrooms.

- a. Leverage the ongoing effort to review and revise CSPP quality improvement approaches (including through the CSPP Quality Rating Improvement System Block Grant and the UPK Mixed Delivery Workgroup) to deepen coherence in quality across the UPK-3rd grade continuum.
- b. Conduct a crosswalk of “high quality” UPK-3rd grade standards with the standards and guidance that currently support expanded learning programs (including ELOP, ASES, and other relevant programs).
- c. Explore existing grant and formula funding opportunities for high-needs schools to implement reduced student:teacher ratios that are informed by national high-quality standards (i.e., 10:1 student:teacher ratio for UPK, and 20:1 ratio in K-3).
- d. Examine opportunities to ensure continuity in quality with program standards outlined in the QRIS across the state and other high-quality early learning program standards (e.g., Head Start, State System of Support).
- e. Create opportunities for shared professional learning among administrators and educators, UPK-3rd grade.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

1.2.4

OBJECTIVE:

Engage all divisions, across all branches within CDE, to ensure they are actively identifying and acting upon strategies to improve UPK-3rd grade alignment and continuity.

- a. Implement Universal Meals with access to training on how to effectively offer programs and encourage participation. Provide support and TA to nutrition services in schools.
- b. Expand the UPK communications campaign to embrace UPK-3rd grade framing, so that community partners and families alike are engaged with schools year-after-year.
- c. Work with the Kitchen Cabinet’s Support System Constellation to determine high-impact opportunities to leverage efforts in support of the UPK-3rd grade agenda.
- d. Review Expanded Learning programming and supports to ensure they are inclusive of UPK-3rd grade, such as:
 - Program quality standards
 - Monitoring, review, training and technical assistance
 - The ELOP Quality Self-Assessment Tool (QSA) that is under revision

STATE POLICY AREA 3:

Instructional Resources and Supports - Aligned Learning Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment

The CDE has made great progress to ensure California’s P-3 educators and administrators have access to instructional resources informed by the science of learning and development, and supportive of a coherent UPK-3rd grade approach. For example, the revision of the *Preschool Learning Foundations* and the efforts to examine and improve the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) are significant works in progress. The three objectives below emphasize building on CDE’s work with a focus on P-3 and equity for young students.

<p>1.3.1 OBJECTIVE:</p> <p>Incentivize LEAs to use the revised <i>Preschool Learning Foundations</i> as a complement to the state’s K-3 standards to ensure a coherent instructional focus, not only in ELA and math, but also in social and emotional development, and approaches to learning.</p>	<p>IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Establish a working group that includes the Curriculum Frameworks & Instructional Resources Division within IMAB and the Early Education Division within OFAB to design strategies that encourage LEAs to implement aligned standards. Strategies might include embedding the use of aligned standards in existing school accountability mechanisms such as comprehensive support and improvement planning or P-3 Ready School grants.b. Ensure educators with expertise teaching across content areas (e.g., early literacy and math) in UPK-3rd grade – especially those who specialize in teaching multilingual learners, children with disabilities, and children who have disproportionate experience with suspension and expulsion – are essential partners in the working group.
<p>1.3.2 OBJECTIVE:</p> <p>Establish systems that encourage educators to consistently collect assessment data/information about children’s development and learning and share it with colleagues as children transition from one grade into the next grade across the UPK-3rd grade continuum.</p>	<p>IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Assist LEAs (with funding or guidance) to support elementary schools to allocate dedicated planning time for educators to share assessment data that will facilitate transitions for students as they begin UPK and move through the early elementary grades.b. Provide resources and support to LEAs to regularly examine trends in children’s development across all learning domains – language, literacy, math, social-emotional and approaches to learnings – across the UPK-3rd grade continuum to support continuous quality improvement efforts.c. Ensure student assessments are available that are aligned across UPK-3rd grade and normed in multiple languages. Elevate the importance of translation of communication materials for families.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

1.3.3

OBJECTIVE:

Identify state-endorsed criteria for LEA selection of curricula that are aligned to support coherent instruction, UPK-3rd grade.

- a. Provide consultation to integrate UPK and K-3 perspectives into the review of curriculum frameworks that accompanies the ELA/ELD standards.
- b. Ensure consultants who develop curriculum frameworks understand the CDE's P-3 vision and integrate playful learning and the science of learning and development into guidance.
- c. Integrate MLL instructional frameworks (e.g., SEAL) into the curriculum framework review process.
- d. Consider appropriate adaptations to curricula that will support children with disabilities to meaningfully engage in learning.



PILLAR #2

Build and support a workforce that specializes in P-3.

GOAL

High-quality instruction and effective learning experiences across the UPK-3rd grade continuum rely on administrators and educators who dedicate themselves to creating organizational structures and classroom cultures that engage and support all young children and are aligned across grades.

This pillar addresses the workforce: classroom educators and extended learning staff, as well as administrators at the county, district, school, and UPK program levels, who ensure children and families have high-quality, coherent learning experiences from UPK through 3rd grade. Research shows teachers are most effective when they have specialized knowledge in teaching young children, grounded in the science of early childhood development. Often, administrators³⁷ who support elementary schools lack preparation specific to young children's learning and development. Educators are often only able to enact high-quality developmentally informed teaching practices to the extent that their school principal and district leadership understand/support those practices. Therefore, attending to educators' and administrators' knowledge and understanding of early learning is essential to realizing CDE's P-3 vision.

The following set of state policy strategies identifies state-level actions that could expand California's efforts to develop a robust and diverse cadre of administrators and educators who are well prepared and supported, across all positions and qualifications, to guide children's learning and development with a whole child approach from UPK-3rd grade. Essential to the success of this work is ensuring there are multiple pathways for existing and prospective educators to gain or deepen P-3 expertise which includes providing effective early literacy and math instruction, supporting multilingual learners, using inclusive and restorative practices, and combatting bias.

The state policy areas address:

- 1. The preparation and credentialing systems for teachers and administrators**
- 2. Ongoing professional learning and continuous quality improvement approaches**
- 3. Recruitment and retention of a robust and diverse workforce**

³⁷ Administrators include county and district superintendents, other district central office leaders, school board members, elementary school principals, and PreK/ECE directors and managers (both district- and community-based).

STATE POLICY AREA 1:

Credentials and Professional Preparation

California has made important progress toward establishing a PK-3 Early Childhood Education Specialist Instruction Credential. In addition to the new PK-3 Credential, there are other accreditations accessed by the UPK-3rd grade workforce: the Child Development Permit, the Multiple Subject Credential, the Administrative Services Credential, as well as additional endorsements such as the Bilingual Authorization. Building the UPK-3rd grade workforce involves collaboration between the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) and Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), as well as LEA-based preparation programs across the state. The five objectives below point toward important next steps in this work.

2.1.1

OBJECTIVE:

Explore opportunities to review all of the credentials for educators working in settings across the UPK-3rd grade continuum, to ensure alignment of expectations that are relevant to the UPK-3rd grade continuum and address equity.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

- a. Review the TPEs for the Multiple Subject Credential for opportunities for alignment, particularly related to the PK-3 Credential's early literacy TPEs.
- b. Review the Child Development Permit competencies to elevate the science of learning and development and equitable, culturally and linguistically responsive practices for children from birth to kindergarten entry.
- c. Work with IHEs to elevate central issues of equity in their teacher preparation programs:
 - **Multilingual learners:** ensure competencies address culturally affirming practices, understanding the nature of multilingual learning, and appropriate assessment approaches for multilingual learners in the early grades.
 - **Special education:** ensure competencies address the fundamentals of child development, multiple tiers of support, and inclusion.
 - **Racial disparities:** ensure competencies address implicit bias, culturally affirming practices, classroom management and disciplinary strategies, and two-way engagement with families.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

2.1.2

OBJECTIVE:

Encourage all IHE-based teacher preparation programs, including alternative paths to becoming credentialed, to include up-to-date content on child development, research-aligned effective early literacy, math, content area instruction, and equity for children and families. This content should be included in programs preparing teachers for both the Multiple Subject Credential and the PK-3 Credential.

- a. Review and revise CTC's Accreditation Framework for IHE teacher preparation programs to ensure faculty who teach in Multiple Subject Credential and PK-3 Credential pathways possess or increase their own knowledge and competence related to effective teaching of young children, early literacy, multilingual learners, inclusion and special education, and racial equity.
- b. Establish and support structures and processes *among* Institutions of Higher Education, including community colleges, to support P-3 coursework that meaningfully incorporates content related to teaching and learning of young children (birth through age 8), multilingual education, inclusion and special education, and racial equity. These might include, but are not limited to, shared syllabi, banks of shared content (e.g., readings, videos, assignments), and professional learning communities of faculty. Learn from the example of [UC/CSU Collaborative for Neurodiversity and Learning](#).
- c. Provide incentives to IHEs to convene and plan for the implementation of the PK-3 Credential and leverage the expertise and capacity of faculty that teach courses for the Child Development Permit.
- d. Consider ways to incorporate essential P-3 competencies into the Multiple Subject Credential, to ensure all elementary teachers (namely those who do not pursue the PK-3 Credential) are exposed to content about effective teaching practices for young children and have clinical practice in UPK-3rd grade settings.



IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

2.1.3

OBJECTIVE:

Develop alternative pathways and incentives for educators to pursue credentials and gain specialized knowledge in early learning, with particular attention to facilitating access for bilingual educators, special educators, and educators who reflect the diversity of the student population.

- a. Provide incentives to engage racially and linguistically diverse educators to pursue the PK-3 Credential, including those who come from marginalized communities. Incentives might include:
 - Access to financial aid, both for units and other costs
 - Support for addressing uncertainty and discrimination in the labor market
 - Transportation to access higher education or online opportunities
 - Access to coursework that is offered in languages other than English
 - Access to schedules that help teacher candidates balance work and family
 - Paid internships so candidates can teach while earning their credential
- b. Create pilot efforts for teacher preparation programs, including two- and four-year IHEs, to establish innovative or alternative pathways (e.g., credit for prior learning; dual enrollment programs; place-based programs; prior learning assessments) to ensure more teachers who represent the diversity of the state enroll in and complete the Child Development Permit or the PK-3 Credential. These innovations should include student teaching placements in classrooms that span the UPK-3rd grade continuum.
- c. Actively engage community college faculty with expertise in advancing equity in efforts to develop coursework and degree pathways for UPK-3rd grade educator advancement.
- d. Explore pathways for special educators to gain qualifications to teach young children in UPK general education settings and be recognized as the teacher of record.
- e. Articulate pathways for educators who hold the Child Development Permit to acquire the PK-3 Credential.
- f. Develop pathways and incentives to support UPK-3rd grade educators to acquire Special Education Credentials.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

2.1.4

OBJECTIVE:

Establish a plan to revise Administrative Services Credential Program Standards and California Administrator Performance Expectations (CAPEs) to incorporate P-3 principles, content, and strategies. Notably, this includes ensuring principals are both administratively and instructionally equipped to lead across the UPK-3rd grade continuum.

- a. Review Administrative Services credential to identify ways that P-3 content – such as the science of young children’s learning and development; meaningful engagement with families and community partners; or school cultures that value early learning – be integrated into existing requirements and resources.
- b. Review Administrative Services credential to ensure equity-forward strategies specific to UPK-3rd grade are integrated into existing requirements and resources. At a minimum, these strategies should include inclusionary practices, addressing racial bias, and engaging multilingual children and families.
- c. Explore funding opportunities to pursue revision of the CAPEs.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

2.1.5

OBJECTIVE:

Identify opportunities to collaborate with IHE *administrator* preparation programs to serve as model programs that incorporate P-3 principles, content, strategies.

- a. Engage IHEs that prepare district and school administrators and leaders to review their coursework and field placements to ensure all administrator candidates are engaged in content and experiences directly related to UPK-3rd grade.
- b. Incentivize aspiring principals and administrators to pursue coursework and field-based experiences directly related to UPK-3rd grade.

STATE POLICY AREA 2:

Ongoing Professional Learning and Systems to Advance Continuous Quality Improvement

California has a deep commitment to supporting ongoing professional learning for educators and administrators. At the state level, multiple entities are involved including, but not limited to, Quality Counts California, CDE’s Educator Excellence & Equity Division (EEED), and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE). The objectives below intend to cultivate collaboration among entities and emphasize P-3 alignment across professional learning systems.

2.2.1

OBJECTIVE:

Develop consistent guidance and common content and materials for professional learning for UPK-3rd grade educators and leaders.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

- a. Update the Quality Professional Learning Standards (QPLS) to provide more guidance on UPK-3rd grade, including alignment with the PK-3 TPEs and the Preschool Learning Progressions.
- b. Engage UPK and K-12 educators and leaders to identify and define key concepts and terms related to P-3 pedagogy and practice. Work with state, regional, and local agencies and education partners that provide professional learning to build acceptance for and understanding of common language for UPK-3rd grade educators.
- c. Explicitly allow professional learning resources for educators to be shared across the UPK-3rd grade continuum (e.g., increase opportunities for UPK educators to engage in MTSS-supported professional learning; allow TK-3rd grade educators to access resources that support QRIS/QCC).

2.2.2

OBJECTIVE:

Ensure that P-3 professional learning for educators and administrators aligns with the science of young children’s learning and development.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

- a. Design specialized professional learning for educators who move from upper grades (4-12) to teach UPK-3rd grade, including comprehensive and developmentally informed attention to children’s social, emotional, and physical (e.g., nutrition) well-being.
- b. Fund Communities of Practice for elementary principals to support developmentally informed UPK implementation that occurs alongside UPK-3rd grade alignment efforts.
- c. Explore ways to leverage the California Preschool Instructional Network (CPIN) system used by UPK providers in community-based organizations and LEAs to integrate and align UPK-3rd grade professional learning.
- d. Design P-3 professional learning opportunities for district leaders, principals, and educators to work together, across role types, to advance UPK-3rd grade pedagogical coherence.
- e. Seek funding to support locally delivered cross-grade professional learning related to UPK-3rd grade-specific tools or frameworks (e.g., revised Preschool Learning Foundations; transition to elementary school toolkit).

<p>2.2.3</p> <p>OBJECTIVE:</p> <p>Provide guidance on district or county-wide onsite, ongoing, job-embedded coaching supports to implement P-3 professional learning content and materials to fidelity.</p>	IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Examine criteria for grant funding that supports coaches/coaching and build alignment with P-3 priorities. b. Review and revise the CSPP portion of Quality Counts California to support best practices in UPK, identifying opportunities to strengthen alignment between CSPP and TK-3rd grade professional learning systems. c. Explore opportunities to collaborate with Quality Counts California to provide coaching for UPK-3rd grade educators and leaders. d. Engage the statewide System of Support to identify existing and new opportunities to expand coaching and other job-embedded support for UPK-3rd grade educators.

<p>2.2.4</p> <p>OBJECTIVE:</p> <p>Leverage partnerships with statewide organizations/structures that serve county and school district leaders, school board members, principals, and other TK-12 system-level administrators to ensure they include comprehensive P-3 strands in their work (e.g., publications, convenings).</p>	IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Collaborate with the 21CSLA State Center and Regional Academies to expand their roles to include professional learning for UPK and support for P-3 quality. a. Develop systems for EEED, CCEE, and others to identify P-3 professional learning opportunities for leaders at the district, county, and state levels. a. Establish and maintain regular communications with influential membership groups (e.g., County Superintendents), ensuring that they regularly and proactively provide accurate, up-to-date, and practical information about UPK-3rd grade to their constituents.

<p>2.2.5</p> <p>OBJECTIVE:</p> <p>Align professional learning opportunities across the UPK-3rd grade continuum to include an emphasis on equity-forward practices.</p>	IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review all CDE-supported professional learning opportunities (e.g., webinars, guidance, grants) to determine the extent to which P-3 priorities are included (e.g., science of young children’s learning and development; supporting MLLs, children with disabilities; addressing historic and systemic biases). Revise and align, as necessary. b. Develop professional learning and coaching resources to support UPK-3rd grade teachers and paraprofessionals to strengthen their understanding and implementation of strategies that support home language, restorative justice, and inclusion. c. Identify and develop partnerships with statewide organizations that provide equity-focused professional learning opportunities to UPK-3rd grade educators; collaborate to align their work with the state’s P-3 vision.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

2.2.6

OBJECTIVE:

Design and support *UPK-3rd grade teacher effectiveness systems* that emphasize high quality instructional practices.

- a. Provide guidance to principals and other supervisors regarding how to use P-3 performance measures and continuous quality improvement systems effectively when supervising and supporting teachers across UPK-3rd grade (e.g., disseminate guidance to support the use of the CSTPs for educators in UPK-3rd grade, with grade-specific examples).

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

2.2.7

OBJECTIVE:

Design and support *administrator effectiveness systems* that value collegiality and recognize/honor the importance of collaboration across UPK-3rd grade (e.g., shared non-evaluative observations).

- a. Provide guidance to superintendents (or other relevant system administrators) regarding how to use performance measures effectively when evaluating principals who oversee UPK-3rd grades (e.g., [California Professional Standards for Education Leaders](#)).
- b. Review support systems that advance continuous quality improvement and professional growth for UPK-3rd grade program administrators in the implementation of P-3 approaches (e.g., examine whether opportunities exist within CDE's Educator Effectiveness funding to elevate P-3 leadership).



STATE POLICY AREA 3:

Recruitment and Retention of a Robust and Diverse Workforce

California is committed to developing P-3 administrators and educators across all positions and qualifications who specialize in young children’s learning and development and are representative of the populations served in communities.

<p>2.3.1 OBJECTIVE:</p> <p>Create more opportunities for existing and aspiring early educators to pursue the PK-3 Credential and find appropriate job placements that support their growth and expertise.</p>	<p>IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Work with IHEs to offer credit for prior learning and accelerated pathways, particularly for experienced early educators and Child Development Permit holders, seeking teacher licensure and the PK-3 Credential.b. Designate educators with PK-3 Credential as a specialized category for recruitment efforts.c. Articulate career pathways for aspiring and existing early educators that will maximize their growth and commitment to teaching in UPK-3rd grades.d. Work with district administrators to value the PK-3 Credential and prioritize hiring/placing teachers who hold the credential to work in UPK-3rd grade.e. Provide guidance on hiring, staffing, and supports for small districts that combine TK and K into one classroom.
<p>2.3.2 OBJECTIVE:</p> <p>Develop recruitment and retention efforts that specifically address racial, gender, socio-demographic, and linguistic diversity representation among educators working within UPK-3rd grade.</p>	<p>IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Ensure there is targeted recruitment (incentives and pipeline) for bilingual educators across UPK-3rd grade.b. Establish mentoring efforts to facilitate retention, with attention to workforce diversity.c. Recruit early educators to pursue the PK-3 Credential and provide ongoing job-embedded supports to facilitate their growth and success.d. Collaborate with community colleges and high schools to lead opportunities (e.g., dual enrollment) for linguistically, racially, and culturally diverse aspiring and existing early educators to pursue UPK-3rd grade credentials, degrees, and careers.

PILLAR #3

Focus on durable systems to ensure sustainability.

GOAL

To ensure P-3 is more than a short-lived initiative, it is essential to implement mechanisms, resources, and structures that reflect, support, and sustain a shared vision, collaborative relationships, and mutual accountabilities across UPK and TK-12.

A sustained P-3 reform effort involves a coherent approach to the processes, systems and structures that support and organize the myriad efforts that influence UPK-3rd grade learning across the state. Shifting toward a P-3 paradigm at the state level involves activating a culture of collaboration and learning among ECE and TK-12 leaders at each level of decision-making: local, regional, and state.

Four policy areas address structures and systems to facilitate sustained P-3 approaches:

1. **Strategic plans and visions**
2. **Governance structures**
3. **Resources (fiscal and human) to sustain P-3 implementation**
4. **P-3 data systems that are reliable, integrated, and comprehensive**



STATE POLICY AREA 1: Strategic Plans and Vision

California’s Great Start P-3 vision and the collaborative development of this report are important steps toward cultivating a shared understanding about state policy priorities. These efforts help set organizational expectations. The CDE, CTC, and other key state agency partners can advance a P-3 agenda by ensuring that existing and new plans elevate the P-3 continuum. Additional objectives and actions can deepen the state’s prioritization of P-3.

<p>3.1.1 OBJECTIVE: Highlight P-3 as a priority in and across state agencies, councils, boards, and other governing entities.</p>	<p>IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continue collaborations among CDE, CTC, and CCEE to develop a shared vision for P-3, with an emphasis on how the agencies are working together to support diverse learners. Conduct an audit of all planning/reporting documents that LEAs must submit to CDE and ensure consistent messaging and priorities related to UPK-3rd grade are embedded in each. Examine Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) expectations and reporting requirements for opportunities to emphasize P-3 (e.g., add optional UPK-3rd grade-specific questions in template, State Board engagement, webinar for best practices). Articulate CDE’s vision for multilingual learners with specific attention to coherence and alignment, including the consideration of a P-3 focus in the implementation of key practices such as the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC). Articulate CDE’s vision for inclusive practices with specific attention to coherence and alignment that ensures children with disabilities are provided access to high-quality experiences, UPK-3rd grade.
<p>3.1.2 OBJECTIVE: Develop communication strategies that consistently and publicly elevate CDE’s P-3 vision in order to promote understanding within CDE as well as with CDE’s partners.</p>	<p>IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Develop succinct talking points for districts to highlight the value of P-3 as well as specific efforts districts can make to advance P-3. Develop two-way communications and feedback loops with County Offices of Education and other local implementation partners to deepen the connections between the state level P-3 vision and the alignment approaches taking place at the local level. Leverage statewide communication networks (e.g., listservs, conferences, Bilingual Coordinators Network (BCN)) to provide explicit guidance about P-3 alignment strategies. Identify opportunities to extend UPK communication campaign collateral with an explicit focus on P-3, with messages that are accessible to families and communities and emphasize the linguistic and cultural diversity in California’s communities (e.g., address translation). Present P-3 to targeted groups who influence P-3 policy and practice at the local level (e.g., CA County Superintendents’ Curriculum and Instruction Steering Committee (CISC), CAAASA).

STATE POLICY AREA 2: Governance Structures

The decision-making structures and processes both within CDE and among education-focused state agencies influence the extent to which policies, funding, regulations, and guidance are aligned, coherent, and consistently recognize the significance of UPK-3rd grade. State-level structures also influence the extent to which local agencies and communities are incentivized to reform their own visions, structures, and policies to support P-3 alignment. Through the Kitchen Cabinet, State Leadership Team, and partnership between CDE and CTC in developing the PK-3 Credential, California is laying groundwork for on-going P-3 governance in California. The objectives below emphasize sustaining and deepening the work.

3.2.1

OBJECTIVE:

Advance collaboration and establish P-3 organizational structures that engage leadership from key governmental entities as well as quasi- and non-governmental entities in order to create coherence across the P-3 continuum.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

- a. Continue to engage leaders who hold cabinet-level authority in the state's P-3 vision: the Governor's Office, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and State Board of Education.
- b. Explore opportunities to sustain the Kitchen Cabinet and State Leadership Team as durable entities.
- c. Engage state-level leadership teams to deepen their focus on issues of P-3 coherence and continue to connect the dots across distinct policy priorities (e.g., demonstrate how P-3 aligns with SSPI's focus on literacy and 3rd grade reading).
- d. Establish durable and accessible mechanisms for engaging input from families, educators, and leaders (e.g., through the constellation process) prior to and through the course of implementing the P-3 vision.
- e. Sustain support for ongoing collaboration between CTC and CDE throughout the implementation of the PK-3 Credential.

3.2.2

OBJECTIVE:

Create structures and regular opportunities to promote internal collaboration across CDE's branches and divisions, to ensure both senior leadership and mid-level managers have consistent time to deepen and extend their P-3 alignment efforts.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

- a. Within OFAB, continue intentional and regular opportunities for divisions to collaborate on P-3 implementation opportunities.
- a. Plan and implement consistent, ongoing opportunities for cross-branch and cross-division professional learning associated with the P-3 strategic vision, including OFAB, IMAB, and other branches within CDE.
- a. Integrate P-3 focus into CDE inter-agency workgroups (e.g., English Learner Initiatives workgroup, BCN, Supporting Inclusive Practices Project (SIP)).

STATE POLICY AREA 3:

Resources (Fiscal and Human) to Sustain P-3 Implementation

This state policy area specifically focuses on fiscal and human resources allocated to advance the state's P-3 vision. California has made great strides to allocate funding that will enhance access to a high-quality continuum with the expansion of UPK. Additional resources have also been allocated to build and strengthen the P-3 workforce. Within this state policy area, the attention is on ensuring state and local resources, human and fiscal, are in place to facilitate P-3 collaboration.

3.3.1

OBJECTIVE:

Allocate human and fiscal resources that ensure dedicated staff support P-3 collaborations at the state level, and among local- and/or regional-level stakeholders.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

- a. Establish position(s) within CDE for P-3 facilitation and oversight, held by individuals with sufficient background and experience in local level TK-3rd grade contexts.
- b. Request funding for new position(s) that have explicit responsibility for facilitating P-3 collaboration.
- c. Identify staff within each CDE branch that can be responsible for coordinating P-3 knowledge and efforts throughout the branch, and partner with similar staff across branches.
- d. Develop and widely disseminate explicit guidance to LEAs about the allowability of using various funding streams to support staffing for P-3 alignment.
- e. Provide administrative support to district leaders to ensure they have time to allocate to P-3 implementation as well as the knowledge/understanding to examine practices and implement strategies to support UPK-3rd grade coherence.
- f. Develop and disseminate sample job descriptions for local UPK-3rd grade positions that explicitly include responsibilities that span UPK and K-3.
- g. Facilitate county-level P-3 professional learning sessions to provide a foundation for P-3 planning at the local level. Identify ways for professional learning to occur in partnership with the County Offices of Education, County Boards of Education, and Quality Counts California.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

3.3.2

OBJECTIVE:

Identify the variety of federal, state, local, and private funding sources that include services for children, P-3, and produce a state-level P-3 funding guide to support LEA understanding to braid/blend/stack funding to support alignment priorities.

- a. Identify opportunities within federal funding sources that would allow greater emphasis on P-3 strategies (e.g., Title I, Title II, Special Education, Head Start, Child Care Development Block Grant). Once identified, work at the state level to embed P-3 priorities. As appropriate, revise efforts at the state level, then provide guidance to LEAs about how to use these funds to support P-3 strategies. For example, consider allocating Title II dollars to support elementary principals' professional learning related to UPK-3rd grade.
- b. Identify existing funding that flows from CDE to LEAs that can be used to support P-3 and ensure communities that have less capacity to blend these funds are supported with technical assistance to benefit from these opportunities.
- c. Assess obstacles that LEAs encounter when they pursue state funding for P-3 relevant activities, with attention to California's diverse geography and diverse local capacities.
- d. Review fiscal tools/guidance/best practices from other states or LEAs that have addressed P-3 with a focus on equity (e.g., states with high rates of children with disabilities in least restrictive environments), then embed/adopt strategies, as appropriate.

STATE POLICY AREA 4:

Reliable, Integrated, and Comprehensive Data Systems

Data are an important means to measure progress and improve systems. To support the state’s P-3 vision, data systems need to be designed and aligned to inform classroom, school, district, county, and state continuous improvement efforts. Comprehensive and integrated data systems include data that address child/student outcomes across developmental domains as well as data about the organizational conditions and systems that support P-3 coherence (interim outcomes). The following three objectives leverage existing data and tools to elevate and inform California’s P-3 vision.

3.4.1

OBJECTIVE:

Begin to identify and/or build data elements that can be used to analyze the state’s progress on P-3 goals, with attention to priorities on disparities across race/ethnicity, language, ability, and socio-economic status.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

- a. Review the state’s comprehensive P-3 vision and identify key indicators that explicitly address issues of equity across UPK-3rd grade, then consider ways to incorporate these indicators into existing data systems:
 - Racial disparities: use of exclusionary discipline across all settings that are disaggregated by grade
 - Children with disabilities: access to inclusive settings and universal design for learning (UDL)
 - Multilingual learners: access to dual immersion programs, bilingual programs, and English language proficiency development
- b. Extend the assignment of the Statewide Student Identifier (SSID) to begin at CSPP enrollment located in community-based organizations.
- c. Identify data sources, other than child assessment data, that may be used to better understand how well P-3 alignment efforts are working (e.g., distribution/access to educators with specialized knowledge in early learning).
- d. Explore the implementation of common UPK-3rd grade assessments that include not only literacy and math but also social-emotional development that can be aggregated and reported at the local, county, state level to inform progress on P-3 efforts

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

3.4.2

OBJECTIVE:

Explore the integration of P-3 indicators in statewide and local-level data dashboards and other publications.

- a. Determine UPK implementation indicator(s) that can inform P-3 progress that may be included in statewide and local-level data dashboards.
- b. Develop a metric/indicator that captures nutrition data that will be visible and useful to families.
- c. Develop a system to receive reports (from educators/school administrators or families) of observed student conduct/discipline issues that occur UPK-3rd grade. Tie the reporting system to the state's monitoring and professional development systems to ensure issues are investigated and addressed.
- d. Examine data on key equity indicators to inform the state's support for school improvement opportunities, such as special education referrals and services, multilingual learners' English proficiency, and racial disparities in harsh/exclusionary discipline practices.
- e. Consider collecting MTSS data including numbers of tiered support services at the LEA level distinct from referrals in the areas of academic, SEL, and behavior supports.

IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES:

3.4.3

OBJECTIVE:

Establish a Research Practice Partnership, or collaboration with a research entity(ies), to study the implementation and efficacy of state-level UPK implementation, P-3 strategies, and use of data for continuous improvement.

- a. Develop intra-agency and inter-agency structures to review data and research on regular intervals to guide P-3 improvement.
- b. Engage/leverage research-focused capacity within CDE and CTC to use available data more effectively and to identify internal data sharing processes that will facilitate deeper understanding of P-3 implementation.
- c. Identify research questions and data sources for supporting UPK-3rd grade implementation and process improvement.
- d. Integrate P-3 vision into the planning for California's "Cradle to Career" initiative to facilitate and guide research projects that address P-3 priorities.
- e. Create a research agenda that includes quantitative and qualitative methods that elevate the experiences of educators, community, family, and children.
- f. Ensure a diversity of perspectives is included in the development, implementation, and analysis of data, with particular attention to historically underrepresented perspectives, when pursuing new research topics and projects that address P-3.

Conclusion

This report marks an important next step for California as it moves toward realizing its Great Start vision. The National P-3 Center's two-year engagement with leaders and staff within CDE and CTC has produced a first-of-its-kind strategic report for P-3 state-level reform.

California has taken bold steps to elevate P-3 alignment as essential to providing young learners with access to high quality and inclusive learning. The state's Great Start vision begins with the expansion of universal prekindergarten, an ambitious undertaking that has the potential to improve child and family wellbeing. California's leaders understand, however, that closing educational opportunity gaps depends on coupling early learning expansion with excellent and cohesive K-3 education.

This report should be considered a starting point for the CDE and CTC. As the commitment to P-3 expands across the state, these strategies can be extended and enhanced as leaders from additional state agencies and local partnerships innovate to build and enact a comprehensive, cross-agency P-3 vision.



Appendix A – The Two-Year Engagement Process

With philanthropic support, the California Department of Education (CDE) engaged the National P-3 Center at the University of Colorado Denver to spearhead a two-year effort both to build the understanding of P-3 approaches among leaders and staff within the CDE and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), and to identify specific strategies that will inform and guide inter-agency collaborations to develop a state-level P-3 strategic plan. Throughout the two years, the work was guided by a team of leaders from CDE and CTC, particularly the Opportunities for All Branch (OFAB). Periodically, NP-3C was invited to share progress with the Kitchen Cabinet.

The process was designed both to understand gaps and opportunities and to intentionally build collaborative connections across state agencies, and among branches within state agencies, in the context of P-3. Five major categories of effort informed this report:

1. Key Informant Interviews.

Recognizing that local communities have the most intimate understanding of both the barriers and the motivators for P-3 alignment, the NP-3C team conducted interviews with leaders and staff from local education authorities who have an established history of working on P-3 reform in California to gather their perspectives. These interviews provided NP-3C with a non-representative, yet important, understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with P-3 work at the local level in California.

2. Large Group Convenings.

During the first year of this project, NP-3C facilitated three meetings with a combined total of about 50 state agency staff representing CDE's OFAB; Instruction, Measurement, and Administration Branch (IMAB); and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. The meetings provided professional learning delivered by NP-3C, and supported the development of a policy inventory that catalogued current initiatives and resources relevant to P-3. The convenings connected leaders through dedicated time to share perspectives and information, and to discuss ways to

improve policies and state-level strategies. Each meeting focused on one of the three organizing constructs: (a) build a continuum of high-quality learning opportunities, (b) support a workforce that specializes in early learning, and (c) durable systems that ensure sustainability. The north star was to consider ways to strengthen California's ability to assure equitable opportunities for multilingual learners and children with disabilities, address racial disproportionalities in children's early learning, and meaningfully engage families.

3. Research and Review.

The NP-3C team utilized a NP-3C state policy framework as the organizing mechanism to analyze California policies in order to leverage the strong efforts already in motion towards P-3 alignment. Data gathered as part of the large group meetings were included and the NP-3C team added to this information through a review of the CDE web site and key reports. Existing California state policy (*Master Plan* recommendations for the ELC system, state-level California State Preschool Program, state-level Transitional Kindergarten, and state-level K-3 policy) were analyzed by the state policy variables and the state-level P-3 alignment strategies for each of the three focal areas (high quality learning opportunities, workforce that specializes in early learning, and durable systems) and policies specific to equity (MLLs, children with disabilities, and racial disparities).

4. *Small Workgroup Meetings.*

During the second year of the project, CDE and CTC leaders nominated staff to participate in small workgroup meetings to chart the course forward in each of the three focal areas of the plan. Each workgroup met two times over the course of two months. The background knowledge participants brought to these meetings was crucial to setting goals for the P-3 system. Ultimately these meetings resulted in strategy development for advancing equity and high-impact policies. The workgroups engaged in robust, productive, and joyful discussions that recognized their current work and sparked development of innovative approaches to move this work forward. Following the small group meetings, recommendations, implementation insights, and barriers were added to the comprehensive framework described in #3 above. This methodical analysis supported identification of strategies to leverage opportunities and fill gaps.

5. *Refinement with Close Colleagues.*

A team from California attended the NP-3C's biannual National P-3 Institute that took place in San Diego on October 17-20, 2022. The team representing the state of California included CDE representation, a representative from a county office of education, a representative from the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, and a representative from the CTC. The California state team had time during National P-3 Institute to work on the plan and strategy development. Following the Institute, the team continued to provide feedback on the report.



Appendix B – Acronyms Used in this Report

21CSLA: 21st Century California School Leadership Academy

ASES: After School Education and Safety Program

BCN: Bilingual Coordinators Network

CAAASA: California Association of African-American Superintendents and Administrators

CAPE: California Administrator Performance Expectations

CCEE: California Collaborative for Educational Excellence

CDE: California Department of Education

CDSS: California Department of Social Services

CFIRD: Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Division (CDE)

CISC: Curriculum and Instruction Steering Committee (of the California County Superintendents)

COE: County Offices of Education

CPIN: California Preschool Instructional Network

CSPP: California State Preschool Program

CSTP: California Standards for the Teaching Profession

CTC: Commission on Teacher Credentialing

DRDP: Desired Results Developmental Profile

ECE: Early Care and Education

EEED: Educator Excellence and Equity Division (CDE)

ELA/ELD: English Language Arts/English Language Development

ELC: Early Learning and Care

ELOP: Expanded Learning Opportunities Program

ELPAC: English Language Proficiency Assessments for California

IEEEP: Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program

IHE: Institution of Higher Education

IMAB: Instruction, Measurement, and Administration Branch (CDE)

LCAP: Local Control and Accountability Plan

LEA: Local Education Agency

MLL: Multilingual Learner

MTSS: Multi-tiered Systems of Support

NP-3C: National P-3 Center

OFAB: Opportunities for All Branch (CDE)

QCC: Quality Counts California

QPLS: Quality Professional Learning Standards

QRIS: Quality Rating and Improvement System

SEAL: Sobrato Early Academic Language

SEL: Social-Emotional Learning

SIP: Supporting Inclusive Practices Project

SSID: Statewide Student Identifier

SSPI: State Superintendent of Public Instruction

TK: Transitional Kindergarten

TPE: Teacher Performance Expectations

UDL: Universal Design for Learning

UPK: Universal PreKindergarten

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