

**Webinar Presentation
for the
Early Childhood Investigations Series**

**“Seamless Preschool to Elementary Transitions:
The Role of Elementary Principals in Creating
Pre-K through Grade 3 Alignment”**

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Leading

Early Childhood

Learning Communities

What
Principals
Should Know
and Be Able
To Do

Research Shows:

- **Children's learning is enhanced by their early childhood experiences**
- **Children who finish pre-K programs are half as likely to need special education services in later grades**
- **Children from low-income families who attend high-quality pre-K programs are:**
 - **More likely to graduate from high school**
 - **More likely to attend college**
 - **Less likely to go to jail**
 - **Less likely to become teen parents**
 - **Less likely to qualify for welfare**

Indicators of High-Quality Pre-K Programs

- ❑ **Supportive interactions between teachers and children**
- ❑ **Safe, supportive and engaging learning environments**
- ❑ **Focus on the whole child**
- ❑ **Meaningful learning for every child**
- ❑ **A culture of authentic assessment and continuous learning**
- ❑ **Connections to families and community organizations**
- ❑ **Effective administration**

NAESP Standards for Early Childhood Learning

- ❑ **Embrace Early Childhood Learning**
- ❑ **Engage Families and Communities**
- ❑ **Promote Appropriate Learning Environments**
- ❑ **Ensure Quality Teaching**
- ❑ **Use Multiple Assessments to Strengthen Learning**
- ❑ **Advocate for High-Quality, Universal Early Childhood Education**

Principals who embrace early childhood learning:

- **Consider birth through the start of fourth grade a continuum for early learning**
- **Engage the school community in understanding children's early development and use that combined knowledge to strengthen learning throughout the school**
- **Balance leadership and management roles to incorporate early childhood programs into the school's culture and organizational structure**
- **Articulate the value of early intervention to prevent later difficulties**

When standard one strategies are in practice, we see:

- **Clusters of pre-K students in the same part of the school with a shared outdoor play area**
- **An inviting, print-rich environment in rooms and hallways featuring student work**
- **Teachers coming together for common planning time to learn from one another**
- **Parents and families of younger students involved in the school**
- **Young children included in events and celebrations in the school**

When standard two is in practice, we see principals who encourage teachers to:

- **Visit children's homes before the beginning of the school year to meet children and families**
- **Create opportunities for families to visit the pre-K classroom before school begins**
- **Encourage parents as pre-K children make their first transition into school**
- **Establish and maintain ongoing communications with all families**
- **Report to parents on children's experiences on a regular basis**

When standard three strategies are in practice, we see principals:

- **Learning about key elements of appropriate learning environments for young children**
- **Observing and analyzing classroom interactions and providing feedback**
- **Tailoring materials, schedules and space to pre-K learning**
- **Paying attention to structural elements, such as class size and teacher-to-student ratio**
- **Paying attention to process elements, such as the nature and quality of interactions between the child and the teacher**

When standard four strategies are in practice, we see:

- **Children having hands-on experiences with pegboards, blocks, number lines and materials for counting and measuring**
- **Literacy groups, where students work with teachers or parent volunteers for small blocks of time each day**
- **Teachers reading aloud to children on a regular basis**
- **New vocabulary being introduced in relation to familiar concepts**
- **Teachers observing one another's classrooms, tailoring their teaching methods to a pre-K environment and having opportunities for professional development**

When standard five strategies are in practice, we see:

- **Teachers collecting children's work in portfolios, making audio recordings of their reading, and observing and summarizing progress**
- **Principals who convene teachers to examine students' work, look for patterns of strengths and weaknesses to evaluate current practice, share best practices and strengthen teaching**
- **Teachers and parents meeting regularly to discuss their children's development**

When standard six strategies are in practice, we see principals:

- **Forming strong connections to families, community organizations and individuals and speaking with them about the need for high-quality pre-K programs**
- **Becoming familiar with early childhood funding streams and policy issues to more effectively advocate for high-quality early childhood programs**
- **Keeping local, state and federal officials abreast of children's needs and school successes**

Eight policies principals can advocate for to ensure that every child can start school ready to learn:

- 1. Provide opportunity for all children to attend high-quality programs**
- 2. Fully fund Head Start and keep it as a federal program**
- 3. Create transitions programs to ensure contact among the variety of pre-K programs**
- 4. Provide full-day kindergarten and after-school from kindergarten through middle school**
- 5. Ensure that pre-K programs meet the needs of the whole child**
- 6. Keep a teacher-student ratio of 15-to-1 or lower in pre-K, kindergarten and grades one through three**
- 7. Provide professional growth programs for principals in all areas of early childhood instruction**
- 8. Train parents to be stronger participants in their child's early learning**



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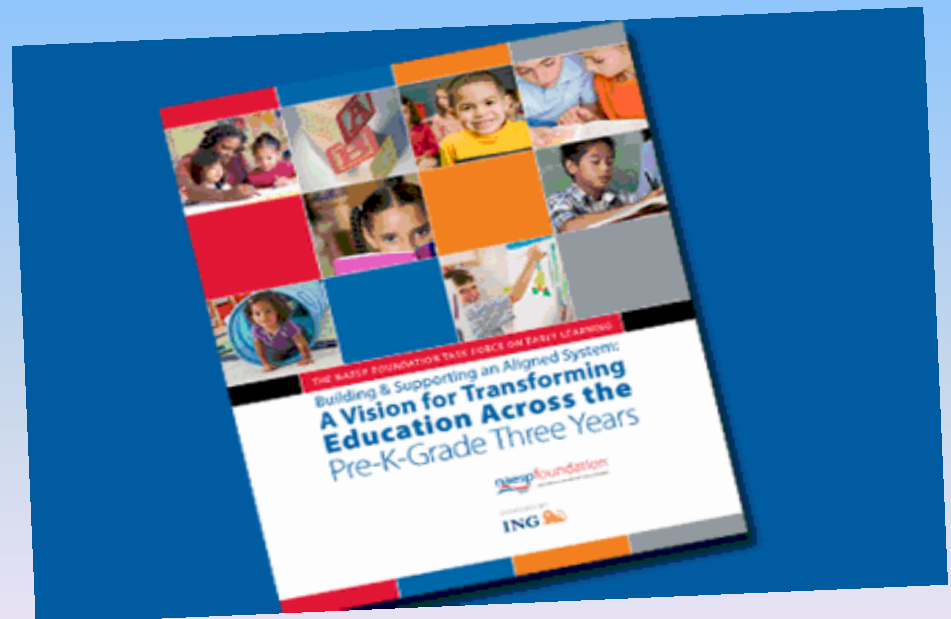
Poll Question

Have you witnessed alignment activities with elementary school principals in your local community? (Yes or No)

“Now if we are to prevent the achievement gap and develop a cradle-to-career educational pipeline, early learning programs are going to have to be better integrated with the K-12 system.”

**U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan,
National Association for the Education of
Young Children Annual Conference,
November 18, 2009, Washington, D.C.**

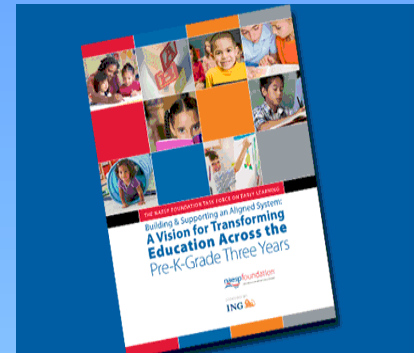
The NAESP Foundation Task Force on Early Learning Building & Supporting an Aligned System: Pre-K-Grade Three Years



Defining the Early Learning Continuum

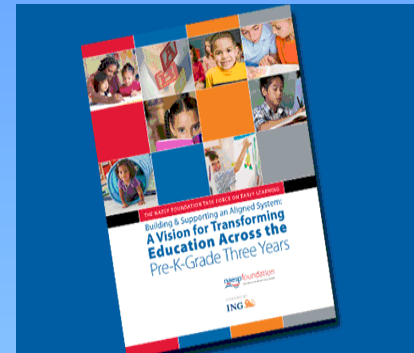
- ✓ **Task Force members embrace the full continuum of early learning from birth through grade three.**
- ✓ **The Task Force focused recommendations specifically on children ages 3-8, or prekindergarten through grade three, to highlight the need for public school engagement with early childhood programs and parents of young children to enhance early school success for all children.**

Action Steps



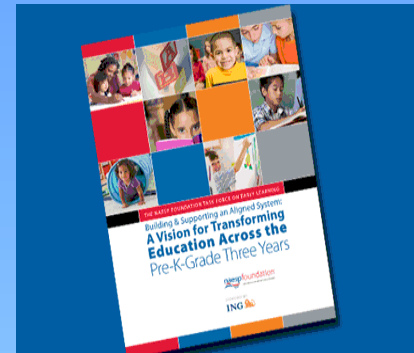
Better integrate and align federal policy, regulation, and funding to enable states and communities to build a coherent system of early learning from pre-K through third grade.

Action #2



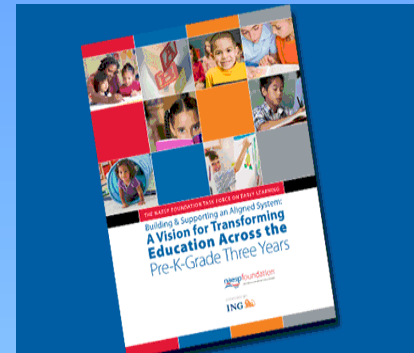
Coordinate and streamline state and local governance.

Action #3



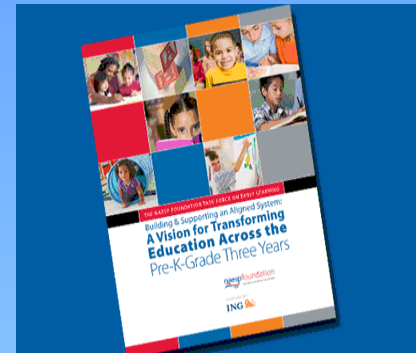
Expand funding for pre-kindergarten through third grade learning to ensure that all children - particularly the most at-risk children - have access to high-quality, full-day learning experiences.

Action #4



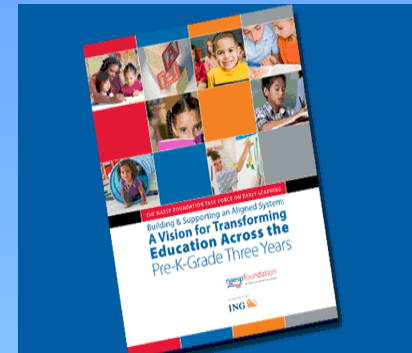
Ensure that funding for the full continuum of pre-K through third grade learning is directed to programs of high quality.

Action #5



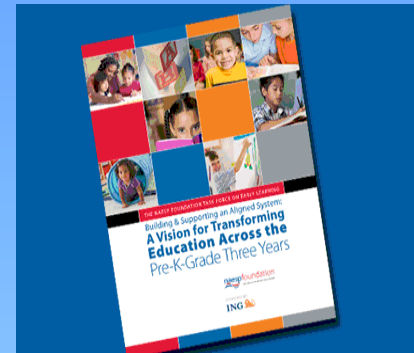
Leverage and integrate private funding with public resources.

Action #6



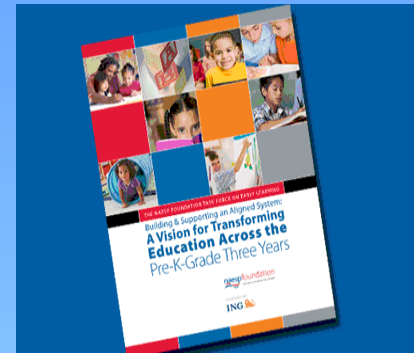
Create an aligned continuum of research-based, age-appropriate standards for young children that include a focus on social, emotional, cognitive, language, and physical development, and creative learning, as well as school-related skills.

Action #7



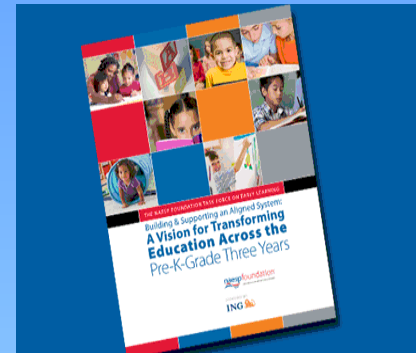
Develop and support an effective, well-compensated workforce with high-quality teacher and administrator preparation programs, professional development, and continuing education. These educators should be versed in the full continuum of early childhood education.

Action #8



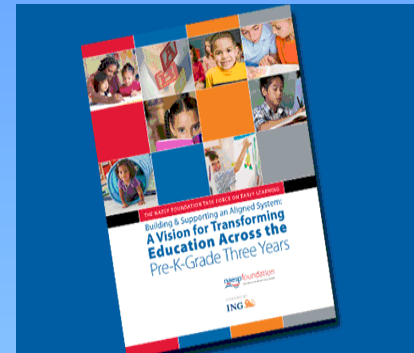
Develop and administer age-appropriate assessments that include both formative and summative evaluations to help guide teaching and learning and to inform program effectiveness.

Action #9



Develop state and local longitudinal data systems that include pre-K student and program information.

Action #10



Evaluate models of early learning integration and alignment through research.

Strengthening ESEA: What Elementary Principals Believe the Law Must Do

- ❖ Give *all* principals the authority and autonomy to lead learning communities and overcome challenging school-based contexts.
- ❖ All school principals must be able to:
 - Lead schools in a way that places student and adult learning at the center;
 - Set high expectations and standards for the academic, social, emotional and physical development of all students;
 - Demand content and instruction that ensure student achievement of agreed-upon standards;
 - Create a culture of continuous learning for adults tied to student learning and other school goals;
 - Manage data and knowledge to make instructional decisions and measure progress of student, adult and school performance; and
 - Actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student performance and development.
- ❖ Encourage and support local efforts to build the capacity of principals through on-going, job-embedded, high-quality professional development, especially in early childhood development.
- ❖ Principal evaluation should be a state and local responsibility and take a carrot, not stick approach. ESEA should encourage state and local principal evaluation systems to provide meaningful indicators for a school leader's trajectory on professional growth and development.
- ❖ ESEA should provide incentives for State and local assessments that include growth models and multiple measures of student performance to accurately gauge social and emotional development, language fluency and comprehension, creativity, adaptability, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.
- ❖ The integrity of targeted formula assistance must be preserved to ensure that federal funds support the most disadvantaged students, and that they constitute a more reliable funding source for supporting continuous and on-going school improvement.

NAESP Advocacy

Professional Development in Early Ed and Pre-K – Grade 3 Alignment

- **Recommendation** – NAESP recommends that a new subpart be added to Title II, Part A of ESEA – consistent with S. 3658 introduced by Senator Udall (D-CO) and H.R. 6302 introduced by Representatives Altmire (D-PA) and Himes (D-CT) in the 111th Congress.

Use of Funds

Funds would be used to provide professional development activities for elementary school principals in early childhood education and development that include activities to help principals:

Acquire principal competencies in early childhood education and development in order to support increased school readiness for students;

Gain a knowledge base and capacity to provide appropriate early childhood settings in the school building in grades pre-K through 3; and

Work collaboratively with early childhood education providers, services providers, and families in creating a continuum of high quality learning for children in the community coming into school settings and through the early elementary years.

Continuum of Learning Act

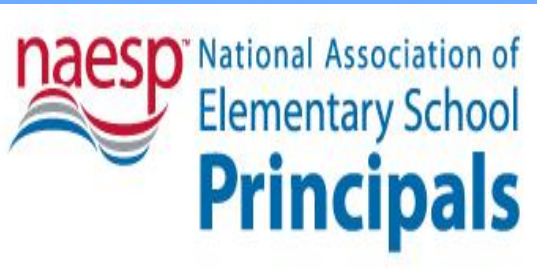
The Continuum of Learning Act updates ESEA to strengthen connections between existing early learning programs and the elementary grades, K-3. Specifically, the Continuum of Learning Act:

- Helps states disseminate information on how Title I funds can already be used for early childhood education under current law;
- Reports on how schools use existing Title I funds for early childhood education;
- Strengthens joint professional development between early childhood teachers and elementary teachers and principals; and
- Strengthens the focus on early childhood development and education within existing teacher and principal training programs.

Bi-partisan, to be introduced by Senator Casey (D-PA), Congresswoman Hirono (D-HI) and Congressman Jones (R-NC).



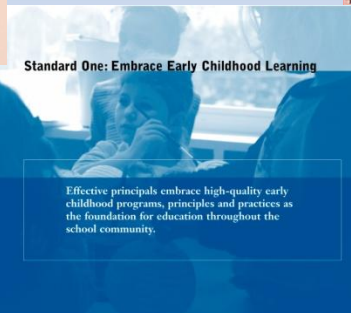
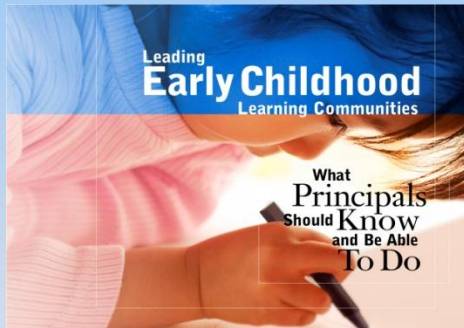
Questions?



For more information on NAESP's early childhood initiatives, visit

www.naesp.org

or contact kpollitt@naesp.org



Building & Supporting an Aligned System:

Transforming Education, Pre-K to Grade 3

