



PreK-3rd Grade Alignment

TARGETED INDICATORS

READING AT GRADE LEVEL BY 3RD GRADE

IMPROVED DISCIPLINARY ISSUES

IMPROVED ATTENDANCE



DESCRIPTION OF THE STRATEGY

During these foundational years of education, the greatest gains are achieved when the services and instruction children receive are well-aligned and structured to build on one another. Vertical alignment between grades (i.e. preschool to kindergarten, kindergarten to first grade) and horizontal alignment within them (i.e. second grade with second grade) assure that all children experience an organized and effective education. Greater gains for young children in academics, self-regulation and social-emotional development will build the foundation for future academic, career and life successes.

PreK-3rd Grade alignment occurs when:

- Instructional leaders “break down silos and work together to ensure that all of the needs of children are met” (NAESP, 2014)
- Learning standards from age three through grade three are aligned and teachers are on the same page regarding what children should know and be able to do
- Environments and routines are similar across critical transition points (i.e. preschool to kindergarten) to increase “familiarity, self-confidence and self-efficacy” (Stipek, D., et.al., 2017)
- Curricula addresses academic and social-emotional learning and connects “developmentally responsive instructional strategies; content-based, thematic units of study; integrated code-based and knowledge-based instruction; and a combination of direct instruction and inquiry-based learning” (Lesaux, 2013)
- Instructional practices are cohesive and “developmentally appropriate and differentiated to meet the needs of all children” (Kauerz & Coffman, 2013)
- Professional development opportunities include teachers of all PreK-3rd Grade levels and provide regular opportunities to collaborate and engage in meaningful dialogue. “Through increased communication and collaboration, both worlds can learn much that can contribute to improving the educational experiences of all young children and to making those experiences more coherent” (NAEYC, 2009)

OREGON EXAMPLE

The Lincoln County School District (LCSD), located on the North Oregon Coast, serves approximately 1,700 K-3 students (5,286 students K-12). LCSD spans a geographic area the size of Rhode Island. It is entirely rural, and 2015-2016 the district qualified to offer all children free lunches when over 95 percent of their students identified as economically disadvantaged. Because so many K-3 students are economically disadvantaged, LCSD has partnered with a local backpack program to support their students. The district also has eight elementary schools that offer 21st Century afterschool programs that provide tutoring and academic support for students.

WHY WAS THE STRATEGY CHOSEN?

The district became interested in exploring PreK-3rd Grade alignment while researching other Oregon schools that had been able to leverage the power of PreK-3rd Grade partnerships to see significant student gains. After nearly five years, they see their own gains and have committed to continuing the work and the community partnerships that sustain the work.



EVIDENCE THE STRATEGY IS EFFECTIVE

Recent case studies of aligned PreK-3rd Grade systems reveal improved outcomes among programs “aligning or coordinating standards, curricula, instructional practices and professional development” (USDOE, 2016). This kind of coordination and connection establishes a continuity of instruction that allows each grade to build on the previous grade, minimizes time-wasting repetition and increases student motivation by extending understanding and building on previously learned skills (Stipek, D., et.al., 2017). The alignment also eases transitions for children as they enroll “into school and [move] across grade levels” (USDOE, 2016b).

Encouraging teachers to collaborate and develop a shared approach to quality instruction improves long-term outcomes for children. “Quality instruction has particular significance during PreK-3rd Grade, when children master foundational skills and concepts, develop attitudes toward school and form ideas about themselves as learners” (NAESP, 2014). This coordinated approach “institutionalizes professional knowledge and effective practices across classrooms, programs and settings” (Lesaux, 2013).

FUNDING OF THE STRATEGY

LCSD, in partnership with the Oregon Community Foundation, received a \$5,000 planning grant in 2013. The district then received a \$250,000 three-year grant from OCF between 2014-2017. Over the three years, the district also leveraged funds from Title grants, Kindergarten Partnership and Innovation grants, Great Start - Early Learning Hub and local organizations. The district then received a \$50,000 fourth-year continuation grant from OCF for 2017-2018. This funding provides coordinated professional development, PreK-3rd Grade curriculum materials and other forms of support identified by stakeholders and partners.

THE STRATEGY IS WORKING IN OREGON

While Lincoln County SD is in the beginnings of their PreK-3rd Grade alignment work, they are already beginning to see the positive impacts of their efforts. Data from the Oregon Community Foundation shows that schools engaging in the PreK-3rd Grade alignment efforts have seen positive impacts on both student achievement and stakeholder perceptions of the work. Stakeholder survey data showed that a greater number of participants saw impacts on equity, use of data, sustainability and outcomes. Stakeholders also reported they felt more welcome at school, and their students were more prepared for kindergarten.

In addition, students who participated in the district’s Learning is Fun Together (LIFT) program (which provides early learning for economically disadvantaged students who are on waiting lists for Head Start) saw scores that averaged higher than both the state and the district in areas of self-regulation on the Oregon State Kindergarten Assessment. Through collaborative efforts, the district and community partnerships are not only creating alignment and cohesive systems, they are closing the achievement gap for children in Lincoln County.

For more information, visit www.oregon.gov/ode.

LINKS TO RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Children’s Institute P-3 Website:

<http://www.childinst.org/p-3-homepage>

Kauerz, Kristie. (2010) PreK-3rd: Putting Full-Day Kindergarten in the Middle.

<https://www.fcd-us.org/assets/2016/04/FINAL-Kindergarten-Brief.pdf>

Mead, Sara. (2011) PreK-3rd: Principals as Crucial Instructional Leaders.

<https://www.fcd-us.org/assets/2016/04/FCD-PrincipalsBrief7.pdf>

Oregon’s Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines and Related Resources:

<http://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/FullDayK/Pages/Early-Learning-and-Kindergarten-Guidelines.aspx>

Russakoff, Dale. (2011) PreK-3rd: Raising the Educational Performance of English Language Learners (ELLs).

<https://www.fcd-us.org/prek-3rd-raising-the-educational-performance-of-english-language-learners-ells/>

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS

Lauren Sigman, Lincoln County SD Early Learning Coordinator,
lauren.sigman@lincoln.k12.or.us

541-270-2456