NEW AMERICA

EDUCATION POLICY

EARLY & ELEMENTARY EDUCATION POLICY

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FROM CRAWLING TO WALKING

RANKING STATES ON BIRTH–3RD GRADE POLICIES THAT BUILD STRONG READERS

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About New America

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To view a full, in-depth analysis of each state and its policies, please visit: **atlas.newamerica.org/crawling-to-walking**.

Reforming Early Education, Birth Through Third Grade

State and Local Reports

From 2015 through 2016, the Early Education Initiative will be producing a series of reports from states and localities across the United States to provide an inside look at efforts to support children's learning from infancy and extending into the early grades. Access to the reports is available through Atlas (**atlas.newamerica.org**), the data and analysis tool designed for New America's Education Policy Program. Reports are forthcoming, or have already been published, in the following geographic areas.

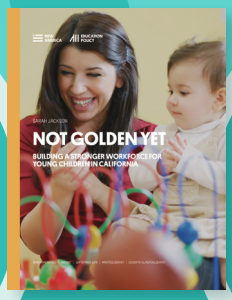
From Crawling to Walking provides analysis and ranks all 50 states and Washington, DC on progress in advancing early education policies.

The David Douglas School District in Portland, OR

Focused on supporting dual language learners' linguistic and academic development.

The San Francisco Unified School District

Focused on aligning teaching and learning across grade levels.



California

Focused on improving the workforce.

Massachusetts

Focused on helping children achieve success in literacy.

Minnesota

Focused on helping children achieve success in literacy.

Washington, DC

Focused on supporting dual language learners' linguistic and academic development.

San Antonio, TX

Focused on supporting dual language learners' linguistic and academic development.

INTRODUCTION

Only about one-third of children attending school in the United States can read proficiently at fourth grade, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as "the nation's report card."[1] If that is not dismaying enough, consider the outcomes for our most vulnerable students. For fourth graders from low-income families, the proportion of students reading on grade level plummets to less than 20 percent. Less than 10 percent of dual-language learners (DLLs) are meeting expectations. These children have difficulty understanding the more complex material covered in school at this age, and the ramifications can be serious.

The first eight years of children's experiences, from birth through third grade (B–3rd), lay the critical foundation of cognitive, social, and emotional skills on which the entirety of their future learning rests. Children who have weak literacy skills at age eight face a series of potentially damaging short- and long-term consequences. Many will repeat a grade and some will drop out of school. Worse still, when they reach adulthood, their lack of a high school diploma makes it more likely that they will face incarceration and become dependent on social supports.[2] To improve children's literacy skills and close opportunity and achievement gaps, federal, state, and local policymakers, along with other stakeholders, have centered on third grade as a pivotal point in academic and life trajectories.

But the literacy and language gaps do not start in third grade, or even in kindergarten, for that matter. They start much, much earlier. According to seminal research by Betsy Hart and Todd Risley, children younger than three from families receiving public assistance hear as many as 30 million fewer words than their peers living in more affluent families, putting them at an early disadvantage.[3] More recent studies have found disparities between young children from poor families and those from more well-off families at as early as 18 months.[4] The focus on early literacy must begin much before third grade. Ideally, it should begin at birth.

The low percentage of American students who are proficient readers is the result of economic, health, education, and other factors. One key variable is that too many state and local education agencies (LEAs) lack a seamless, coordinated, high-quality birth-through-third grade (B–3) continuum of learning. Aligned, high-quality early education programs can narrow opportunity and achievement gaps for students from low-income families while also raising the achievement and accelerating the developmental progression of all students.[5]

Nonie Lesaux, professor of education at Harvard School of Education, has made the case that isolated and compartmentalized policy reforms are insufficient for making sure children are on track in the birth-through-third grade years.[6] A comprehensive approach to literacy includes attention to a wide range of factors, including teacher preparation and professional development; early identification of struggling students and intervention to support their success; comprehensive and shared assessments; language-rich and engaging reading curricula; provision of pre-K and full-day kindergarten; and school-community-family partnerships.

In *PreK–3rd: Getting Literacy Instruction Right*, a 2013 report for the Foundation for Child Development, Lesaux says:

> Despite all of our knowledge about the importance of PreKindergarten for later academic success, our public education system in most states still only starts at Kindergarten. In order to give all children a stronger start and a higher quality education, school must start with PreK. It must include aligned and coordinated standards, assessment, curriculum, instruction, and professional development throughout the PreK–12 system.[7]

The same year, the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices released *A Governor's Guide to Early Literacy: Getting all Students Reading by Third Grade*, detailing five policy actions governors can take to help ensure all children are able to read at grade level by the end of third grade. The NGA's recommended actions mirror Lesaux's, calling on governors to:

- Adopt comprehensive language and literacy standards and curricula from birth through third grade
- Expand access to high-quality child care, pre-K, and full-day kindergarten

- Engage with and support families as partners in early language and literacy development

- Equip professionals providing care and education with the skills and knowledge to support language and literacy development, especially for dual language learners

- Develop mechanisms to promote continuous improvement and accountability, which includes strengthening quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) to promote language and literacy instruction in early childhood programs, developing a comprehensive assessment system up through third grade, and coordinating early childhood and K–12 state longitudinal data systems [8]

In order to significantly improve children's literacy development as well as learning and development in other areas such as early math, science, and social-emotional domains, federal, state, and local education agencies need to take a comprehensive, coordinated, and connected birth-through-third grade approach. This approach should include an emphasis on pre-K and the early elementary grades, and use a long-term vision to provide a high-quality early education for each and every child.

Yet access to high-quality early education during these years remains rare in the U.S. Early childhood education programs are delivered through a patchwork of school-based, non-school-based, and home-based providers, and the quality of these programs is often questionable. Based on the latest estimates from the National Institute for Early Education Research's *The State of Preschool 2014*, only about 42 percent of four-year-olds and 15 percent of three-year-olds are served by public pre-K programs, including special education and the federal Head Start program.[9] Those enrollment figures do not reflect the quality of programs in which children are enrolled, which varies significantly. Furthermore, children fortunate enough to benefit from high-quality pre-K may lose the benefits of these programs when they continue into elementary schools where curricula, instructional interventions, professional development, and assessments are not necessarily aligned with their pre-K experiences.

The early education workforce, while certainly made up of dedicated and warm caregivers who love working with children, is similarly variable in both preparedness and credentialing. For instance, most states require just a high school diploma for teachers of infants and toddlers. This can also be true for pre-K teachers working in non-school settings and for directors of child care centers, even though developmental science makes clear that these years are crucial for children's growth. Finally, infant, toddler, and pre-K programs all too often feed into elementary schools led by principals who have limited or no experience teaching young children. As a result, too many of their kindergarten through third grade classrooms feature inconsistent instruction and learning environments that are ill-suited to meet young children's needs.

This fragmented, uncoordinated early education non-system in the majority of states has produced dismal outcomes for children, especially children who speak English as a second language, children who have special needs, and children from low-income families.

To determine whether and how states are trying to address this problem, New America's Early & Elementary Education Policy team developed a B–3rd state policy framework informed by research and discussions with other early education experts. Our framework includes state policies in six areas that are essential for supporting children's literacy development and policies that should be part of reading laws when they exist:

1. Educators: Teachers and Leaders

2. Standards, Assessment, and Data

3. Equitable Funding

4. Pre-K: Access and Quality

5. Full-Day Kindergarten: Access and Quality

6. Dual Language Learner Supports

7. Third Grade Reading Laws

Most of the policies in our scan center on PreK–3rd grade, but given the importance of what happens before pre-K, we also include a few areas where states can and should establish policies to better support children's literacy and overall learning and development from birth. We placed states into the categories of **Crawling**, **Toddling**, or **Walking** based on their progress toward achieving 65 policy indicators across our seven individual policy areas and across all of them together. Below we discuss our methods, the policy areas that we included and those that we did not include but see as also important, complex issues in realizing policy goals, and state progress on the indicators.

METHODS

Research Base

New America's state policy framework identifies areas of policy and indicators within those areas that we believe are central to ensuring children are on the right trajectory toward developing strong literacy skills and reading on grade level by the end of third grade. This important point in schooling is when demands for the ability to read, comprehend, write, express ideas, and engage in other, higher-level literacy skills increase.[10] The research that underpins our framework clearly suggests the need for a comprehensive approach to children's literacy development. When states focus on developing children's reading and literacy skills, while paying less attention to things like the preparation of educators, provision and quality of pre-K and kindergarten, children's regular attendance, screening for early development delays, and alignment of standards and assessment, they miss several factors that set all children on the right path.

Figure 1

Seven Policy Areas Influencing Children's Literacy Development

1. Educators: Teachers and Leaders
2. Standards, Assessment, and Data
3. Equitable Funding
4. Pre-K: Access and Quality
5. Full-Day Kindergarten: Access and Quality
6. Dual Language Learner Supports
7. Third Grade Reading Laws

Process

Data Compilation

New America's Early & Elementary Education Policy team compiled data from a variety of sources and reports by other organizations: the Education Commission of the States, the National Institute for Early Education Research, the National Council on Teacher Quality, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes, the Administration for Children and Families, the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education, the BUILD Initiative, the Education Law Center, the National Women's Law Center, and the National Center for Children in Poverty. For a very small number of indicators, we scanned state websites and, when necessary, we contacted state department of education officials to clarify findings. But primarily, our intention was to use data points previously collected by other organizations. There are a number of indicators that we wanted to include, but were unable to include at this time, due to a variety of reasons, including the lack of available information. An explanation of what indicators we left out, why, and why we think they are important can be found in the section below, under *Caveats* and in Appendix I, *Other Structures, Processes, and Policies that Matter*.

Evaluation

Beginning with a 100-point scale, we assigned points to the seven policy areas and then to each of the indicators within each policy category. The largest share of points was allocated to the "Educators" category, as teachers are considered the most important in-school factor to children's success, followed by school leaders, both principals and child care center directors. The next largest point totals were allocated to "Standards, Assessment, and Data," and "Equitable Funding." These areas were followed by "Pre-K: Access and Quality," "Full-Day Kindergarten: Access and Quality," "Dual Language Learner Supports," and "Third Grade Reading Laws," in that order. States without these reading laws did not lose points. Point values were assigned to each indicator under the seven policy areas (See Appendix II for total point values.) based on what we believe to be important according to research in these areas and our own knowledge, experience, and professional judgment.

Caveats

Our analysis looked at state laws and regulations, and not how these respective policies are implemented at the local level. We know that state policies are changing all the time, and depending on the indicator, our sources relied upon data collected in 2012, 2013, or 2014. In some policy areas, because of the information available and supporting research, we were able to be more specific about the ideal policy than in others. For example, while we believe it is important to have a state teaching license that bridges birth-to-five and the early grades of elementary school, we did not indicate specifically what the span should be (i.e., Birth–3rd grade, PreK–3rd, PreK–2nd, or another span). But we did call attention to kindergarten and whether or not those teachers are required to have a state's early childhood educator license. Another example is how we handled early grade assessment in the "Standards, Assessment, and Data" policy area. Here, we chose to simply look at whether a state has a state-level approach issuing requirements or recommendations, to kindergarten through second grade assessment in math and reading.

State and National Activities to Support Children's Language and Literacy Development

While this national scan details many policies that can impact children's literacy development, it does not capture the full scope of efforts happening at the state level. There are a wide variety of national and state programs and initiatives aimed at improving early literacy that did not fall under the scope of this scan because of our focus on state policies. The following examples highlight a few of these many promising and diverse literacy initiatives happening throughout the country. This is not an exhaustive list, but it offers a sampling of some programs and their reach.

Reading First—Part of NCLB

There have been a host of federal grant programs aiming to improve student reading outcomes. The Reading First program was a federally-funded literacy grant program that Congress authorized as part of The No Child Left Behind Act in 2001. Funding for this program ended in 2008.[11] Reading First aimed at improving literacy instruction in kindergarten through third grade by supporting state and local education agencies' efforts to establish scientifically-based reading programs. The funding also supported professional development to prepare educators to effectively teach the reading programs. The funding was also intended to support the use of literacy screening and classroom-based reading assessments in order to monitor student reading progress.

The Department of Education distributed formula grants to states. Then state officials selected local sub-grantees through a competitive process. This program encouraged states and localities to think strategically about early literacy and it expanded the use of evidence-based reading tools. Many states reported improved test scores for students in districts receiving Reading First grants. While Reading First was not found to increase student reading comprehension among K–3 students, it did have a statistically significant impact on the decoding skills of first graders.[12]

Despite the fact that federal funding for Reading First has ended, many states have sustained literacy initiatives that began with Reading First funds and these efforts seem to have had a positive impact on student reading skills.[13]

Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Grants

The Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program was a federal literacy grant program, first funded in FY 2010. This program aimed to improve the literacy of students from birth to twelfth grade, with a specific focus on low-performing schools, English language learners, and students with disabilities. State education agencies were awarded small formula grants to establish literacy teams tasked with developing a high-quality plan that included clear standards, a system of assessments to guide instruction, professional development aligned with standards, a system of data collection and evaluation, and more. Forty-seven state agencies and the District of Columbia developed and submitted comprehensive literacy plans as part of the grant process. Oklahoma's plan, for example, outlined steps being taken to implement a new longitudinal data system to collect information from various agencies and school districts. New York's plan detailed efforts being taken to improve professional development for teachers who instruct English language learners.[14]

For FY 2011, six states were awarded competitive grants in amounts ranging from $7.6 million to $66.5 million. The winning states then awarded sub-grants to local school districts and early learning providers.[15] Fifteen percent of the grant funds had to be set aside to serve children from birth to age five. Georgia was awarded four consecutive Striving Readers grants worth over $91 million from FY 2011 to FY 2014. With this money, the state built on its Reading First work and increased funding for professional development and technical support in 27 of its local education agencies. Georgia policymakers focused their efforts on providing evidence-based professional development for teachers, training teachers to use data in order to deliver targeted literacy instruction, and implementing technology to enhance instruction and allow students to more easily engage with text.[16]

The Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program increased focus on literacy for those states that received formula grants and accelerated efforts to improve literacy in the six states that were funded for consecutive years.

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, launched in 2010 with the help of The Annie E. Casey Foundation, is a partnership between foundations, nonprofits, states, and communities focused on ensuring that all students are reading on grade level by the end of third grade. The Campaign's goal is to ensure that by 2020 at least one dozen states at least double the number of children from low-income families reading proficiently at the end of third grade.

In June of 2012, 124 cities, counties, and towns from 41 states joined together to form the Grade-Level Reading Communities Network. There are now over 160 communities in the network. Each community network aims to increase third grade reading proficiency by focusing on reducing chronic absence, promoting summer learning, and improving school readiness. All communities that are a part of the network submit Community Solution Action Plans targeting early literacy and the Campaign and partners provide these communities with technical assistance as they implement their plans.

Reach Out and Read

Reach Out and Read is an example of a program that targets very young children for early literacy-based intervention. Founded in Boston in 1989, this program now serves more than four million children annually in all fifty states by partnering with medical providers to promote early literacy and school readiness in pediatric exam rooms. Reach Out and Read enables pediatricians to distribute millions of books each year while stressing to parents the importance of reading aloud to children, starting at birth. The program capitalizes on the fact that almost all children see a pediatrician during the first few years of life. Each year, medical providers at Reach Out and Read program sites distribute over 6.5 million books to millions of children around the country.

While a simple idea, research proves that it is an effective one. Fifteen independent, published research studies have examined the impact of the Reach Out and Read program. These studies show that parents served by Reach Out and Read are up to four times more likely to read aloud to their children and that preschoolers participating in the program score three to six months ahead of their counterparts on vocabulary tests.[17] The organization has plans to grow the program throughout the country. This year, the program launched a yearlong project called Prescription for Success, building partnerships between libraries, museums, and program sites. Reach Out and Read hopes to further impact literacy development by connecting families with literacy-based activities at local museums and libraries.

Minnesota Reading Corps

With the goal of ensuring that all children in the state are proficient readers by the end of third grade, Minnesota Reading Corps—the nation's largest AmeriCorps tutoring program—places more than 1,000 literacy tutors in schools each year. Launched in 2003, Reading Corps provides literacy interventions and assessments beginning as early as age three and until the end of third grade. Reading Corps tutors operate in over 900 preschool and elementary school sites across Minnesota. Since its launch, Minnesota Reading Corps has provided targeted literacy interventions to over 125,000 students; it serves approximately 30,000 students annually.

Reading Corps tutors provide targeted reading instruction to individual students using evidence-based strategies. They commit to a year of service and receive continuous training and support from literacy coaches. A 2014 study conducted by the University of Chicago found that students who received reading help through Reading Corps made statistically significant gains in literacy compared to peers who did not receive such help.[18] Pre-K students who received personalized literacy tutoring through Reading Corps were found to be more prepared for kindergarten than their peers in the key areas of conversation skills, vocabulary and background knowledge, book and print rules, phonological awareness, and alphabetic knowledge.[19]

Due to its success, the program has since expanded to include seven other states and DC. Across the country, the Reading Corps program is being used by approximately 1,500 AmeriCorps members in over 900 sites. Research conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago found the Reading Corps model to be highly replicable because the program was effective regardless of the type of school setting in which it was implemented.[20]

NEW AMERICA'S POLICY INDICATORS

In the section below we discuss the rationale for and research supporting the seven policy areas included in this scan and for certain key indicators within those areas.

Educators: Teachers and Leaders

It is well-documented that teacher quality is the most important in-school factor impacting student achievement.[21] School leaders follow close behind. Preparing, recruiting, developing, and retaining high-quality educators who have an understanding of the early grades is essential to a strong B–3rd continuum. Early grade teachers need to be experts in multiple content areas and should have a deep understanding of how young children learn best.[22] Leaders need to know how to best support teachers in providing an enriching learning environment. State-level policies governing educator preparation and licensure should account for the unique needs of PreK–3rd grade teachers who are laying the foundation for children's success in school and later in life.

State preparation and licensure requirements for early grade teachers vary. Most states have an elementary teaching license that spans from kindergarten or first grade to fifth or sixth grade. In recent years, many states have added an early childhood education teaching license that bridges pre-K and kindergarten and extends into at least second grade. There is often overlap in grades between the early childhood licenses and elementary licenses, meaning teachers in the same early grades often have one of two different licenses and therefore have had different preparation.[23] Elementary licenses tend to focus on subject-area content and strategies more appropriate for older children, while early childhood licenses tend to focus more on how to teach new and emerging readers, how to incorporate play, child-directed activities, and exploration into learning, and how to engage families. Early childhood licenses also have a strong focus on child development. Our scan includes whether states have an early childhood license and whether at least kindergarten teachers are required to have it.

When it comes to understanding a teacher's ability to foster children's language and literacy skills, it helps to look at whether teachers are prepared in the science of reading and whether their knowledge of reading pedagogy is assessed in any way. While reading pedagogy exams cannot tell how well a teacher might diagnose a reading challenge in a real-life situation, they do signal how important reading instruction is both for the teacher preparation program and the teacher candidate. Because of this, they are included as an indicator in our scan and states earn points for requiring these assessments.

While pre-service requirements for teachers are important, what matters most is a teacher's ability to translate this knowledge into the classroom. Effective evaluation systems can help ensure that teachers receive meaningful feedback on their practice. Strong school leaders who help establish a culture of high expectations, professional learning and support, and continuous improvement will be better able to keep the most effective teachers in the classroom and encourage those who are not effective to move on.

It is important for principals to understand early childhood development and learning, especially as more and more schools provide full-day kindergarten for all children and pre-K for four-year-olds and three-year-olds. Principals are integral to connecting and scaffolding the PreK–3rd grades.

Many elementary school principals, though, have never taught elementary grades, let alone pre-K. A kindergarten classroom should look very different from a fourth grade classroom, yet principals are often unfamiliar with best practices in the early grades, making it difficult for them to recognize good instruction for young children.[24] Limited understanding of the early grades can be a potential barrier to creating good environments for students, as principals might not be able to identify what appropriate, content-rich instruction looks like for young learners. Preparation requirements, licensure law, and professional development can help ensure that principals have the knowledge to effectively hire and evaluate early grade teachers. In our scan, we award states points for requiring elementary school principals to have knowledge of early childhood and early language and literacy development either through state licensure requirements or preparation program requirements.

Many children begin attending early learning programs earlier than pre-K in settings often referred to as child

Educators: Policy Indicators

- State has an early childhood educator license (PreK–3rd or birth–3rd)
- Kindergarten teachers are required to have an ECE license
- Requires elementary school teachers to have preparation in science of reading
- Requires child development coursework for elementary licensed teachers
- Elementary teacher candidates are required to pass a reading pedagogy test
- ECE teacher candidates are required to pass a reading pedagogy test
- Requires elementary principals to have preparation in early language and literacy development
- Requires elementary principals to have preparation in early childhood
- Teachers are observed at least once every year
- State teacher evaluation systems include multiple measures
- Lead teachers in child care center settings are required to have at least some training (more than a high school diploma)
- Directors of child care centers are required to have at least some training (more than a high school diploma)

care, which can be located in a center- or home-based setting. States establish licensing standards, but they are heavily weighted toward health and safety. Research over the last several decades has made it crystal clear that children begin learning the day they are born and the language they hear, the interactions they have with adults, the environments they are immersed in, and the experiences they have matter a lot.[25] And this means that adults in these settings are doing much, much more than caring for children; they are teaching them. Too many states require lead teachers in infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms to have no more than a high school diploma. Some do not even require that. Several states require nothing more of the directors of those centers even though the job is very similar to that of a principal. In our scan, we award states points for requiring more than just a high school diploma for lead teachers and center directors in licensed child care centers. (We see this as a place to start, but not the end goal.)

Standards, Assessment, and Data

Standards, assessment, and data systems are key components of a strong B–3rd continuum within a state. The better coordinated and connected these components are, the more seamlessly children can move from classroom to classroom and the easier it is for teachers to build upon their academic and developmental skills.

Standards serve to scaffold and sequence learning and development through the grades. Every state has early learning guidelines or standards that cover multiple domains of learning, including language and literacy; cognitive, physical, social, and emotional skills; and different approaches to learning (persistence, curiosity) to develop the whole child. States' K–12 college- and career-ready standards should align with these early learning standards. In our scan, states earn points when they have these standards in place. However, while this is an important place to start, it does not tell the whole story: the depth and breadth of alignment matters even more. It is difficult to get a clear read on the alignment of birth-to-five and K–12 standards, as many states say they have compared or even aligned these standards, but alignment is often only surface deep.

When it comes to **assessment**, the early grades are often overlooked. While states have a clear assessment schedule beginning at grade three, this is not the case for early grades. While assessment of students in the early grades can be complex and a touchy subject, states should have an approach and offer clearly articulated

guidance for school districts and non-public school early learning program providers.

Screenings and diagnostic assessments, as well as formative measures, can be invaluable in evaluating developmental milestones and addressing possible areas of struggle for children needing intervention. State-funded pre-K programs should require the use of a multi-domain assessment and offer recommendations on which assessment to use. Most states have or are developing kindergarten entry assessments. Districts should be required to use the same assessment to make it easier to identify discrepancies from one district to the next.

For kindergarten through second grade, states should, at the very least, make recommendations for reading and math assessments and encourage districts to consider the development of young children in other learning domains. States should also encourage districts and schools to conduct assessment audits, especially for kindergarten, and eliminate duplicative tests. In early childhood the majority of assessment should be formative in nature, ongoing, and completed in the context of a student's daily routines so it can inform teacher instruction.

Strong comprehensive assessment systems in the early years and grades can help ensure that children do not fall through the cracks and end up struggling in third grade. In our scan, states gain points for having recognized the importance of providing assessment guidance and recommendations across the B–3rd continuum.

Standards, Assessment, and Data: Policy Indicators

- Comprehensive early learning standards that include infants, toddlers, and preschoolers
- K–12 college and career ready standards
- K–3 ELA standards include language, literacy, communication skills, mechanics of reading
- K–3 standards incorporate nonfiction and informational texts
- Early learning standards mention dual language learners (beyond the introduction)
- Social-emotional learning standards with indicators for specific grade levels
- Developmental screenings included in state child care licensing requirements
- Developmental screenings included in QRIS requirements
- Requires multiple domain assessment for state-funded pre-K
- Requires multiple-domain KEA
- Statewide KEA (common across districts)
- Provides recommendations or requirements for K–2 literacy and math assessment
- State-funded pre-K, child care, Head Start data part of state longitudinal data system
- Links child-level data across state-funded early childhood programs
- Collects KEA data
- Collects early childhood screening and/or assessment data
- Collects information about chronic absence
- State has a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)
- QRIS rates programs on learning environment and teacher-child interactions
- QRIS rates programs on use of curriculum
- QRIS rates programs on use of child assessment

Every state has a longitudinal K–12 **data** system and most have early childhood data systems, but in only some states do these systems communicate with each other. Most states can connect data from some early childhood programs to their K–12 data system—usually pre-K special education and state-funded pre-K. Information on children's early education experiences is important to their success in kindergarten and beyond. Data are helpful to schools and teachers for preparing to receive new kindergartners, but also to state leaders for making decisions about how best to invest in early education. Data-informed decision making leads to greater opportunity for student success and enables a state to maximize its strengths and ameliorate its weaknesses. In our scan, states gain points for linking child-level data from multiple early childhood programs to the K–12 longitudinal data system.

Equitable Funding

Ninety percent of funding for our public education system comes from state and local monies, mostly local property taxes. This leads to significant disparities in school funding from one district to the next, and schools serving the nation's most vulnerable children—those facing poverty, hunger, family turmoil, high mobility, or other challenges—often have limited economic and noneconomic resources. Some states have funding formulas to help make spending more equitable, but others have formulas that fail to provide satisfactory support for high-need school districts. Not only is funding often inequitable, it is often insufficient as well. In recent years, multiple states have faced lawsuits brought on by school districts, advocacy groups, and parents claiming that the state was not adequately funding public education. Our scan awards points to states for allocating more money to districts with more students facing poverty and for prioritizing education.

Most school funding statutes apply to kindergarten through twelfth grade and do not include pre-K. In some states, pre-K is funded through relatively unstable sources, such as a state lottery or taxes on items like tobacco. Funding pre-K through general school funding streams (or state K–12 funding formulas) not only reinforces that pre-K is part of the public school system, but allows for more stability for pre-K programs. The National Conference of State Legislatures reports that funding pre-K in this way allows the state to better respond to program costs and demand.[26] Regardless of the funding stream, pre-K programs still tend to be funded at lower levels than kindergarten and the later grades. Strong pre-K programs must meet various safety and quality standards, such as low student-teacher ratios. Quality does not come cheap, yet many states do not provide sufficient funding to provide high-quality programs.

Many states also shortchange child care centers serving low-income families receiving child care subsidies through the Child Care and Development Block Grant. The federal government recommends that states reimburse providers at or above the 75th percentile of the current market rate, yet the vast majority of states reimburse at a much lower rate. If child care centers are not reimbursed for the cost of care and education, they will have difficulty providing high-quality services and worthy wages. Further, such low reimbursement rates discourage the highest-quality child care centers from providing services to families with child care subsidies. In our scan, we award states points for matching the federally recommended reimbursement rate.

Equitable Funding: Policy Indicators

- At least one state-funded pre-K program is funded through the state's school funding formula
- State provides per-pupil funding of at least $10,825 (U.S. average)
- State has a progressive funding distribution
- State's local and state spending on education in relation to the state's economic productivity
- Rate of CCDF subsidy reimbursement rate is equal to or above the 75th percentile of current market rate
- Reimburses for days a child receiving CCDF subsidy is absent

Pre-K: Access and Quality

State and local policymakers are increasingly embracing public pre-K as a means to improve student outcomes. Research has shown that high-quality pre-K programs positively impact children's cognitive and social-emotional skills, leaving them more prepared for kindergarten. Some long-term studies have also found that children who attended high-quality early learning programs are more likely to graduate high school and be employed, and less likely to commit violent crimes.[27]

A growing number of states are establishing pre-K programs, but access and quality vary significantly. Ultimately, states should strive to ensure that all three- and four-year-olds have access to high-quality pre-K programs, using public resources to first prioritize the most at-risk children. While many states have been ramping up their programs for four-year-olds, the vast majority of states have yet to provide services for three-year-olds. Yet research shows that two years of pre-K education results in significantly higher performance on both academic and social measures by the time students finish kindergarten.[28] Even in pre-K programs that serve both three- and four-year-olds, there is often only the capacity and funding available to serve a small minority of eligible children.[29]

While access to pre-K is the first step, programs need to be of high quality in order for children to benefit long term. In addition to access, this scan examines quality indicators for state pre-K programs (where they exist) that reflect best practices. For example, the length of day matters—full day is best. Research finds that children who attend full-day preschool programs outperform their peers in half-day programs in reading and math. These gains have been shown to persist through kindergarten and into first grade.[30] Currently, the length of day for pre-K programs varies from as few as two-and-a-half hours a day up to as many as 10 hours a day in different states. Our scan examines the length of the school day for state pre-K programs and we award points to the states that provide at least six hours.

The qualifications for teachers and assistant teachers in pre-K programs also matters for the quality of those programs. Pre-K students will only realize significant academic and non-academic gains if they are taught by well-trained, highly-qualified educators with specialized knowledge of child development and age-appropriate classroom strategies. In our scan, we award points to states that require pre-K teachers to have at least a bachelor's degree as well as ECE specialization. States also earn points for requiring assistant teachers to possess the minimum of a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) prior to serving in the classroom.

Pre-K: Policy Indicators

- State-funded pre-K program
- Percentage of four-year-old children served
- Percentage of three-year-old children served
- Maximum ratio 10 to 1
- Full-day option of at least six hours per day, five days per week
- Conducts site visits
- Teacher required to hold a BA
- Teacher required to have specialization in early childhood
- Assistant teacher required to hold at least CDA

Full-day Kindergarten: Access and Quality

Research shows that full-day kindergarten supports better academic outcomes for students in the early years and beyond.[31] According to data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study: Kindergarten Class of 1998–99, for instance, children in full-day kindergarten programs made statistically greater gains in early literacy skills than their peers in half-day programs.[32] More time in the classroom gives children the opportunity to have a greater number of high-quality early learning experiences and

positive child-teacher interactions that are essential for their academic and developmental growth.[33] A full-day program also gives teachers the opportunity to focus on children in a holistic way, meeting both academic and developmental standards. For instance, teachers in full-day programs are able to introduce more subject areas as well as provide opportunities for child-directed and imaginative play.[34]

As more children attend full-day pre-K, there should be a shift in state policy so that districts are required to offer full-day kindergarten so that children and families can have educational continuity and consistent schedules. States should provide a full day of learning equivalent to the length of the first grade day and funding at least at the same level as first grade. And states must aim to keep class sizes in kindergarten small, with a ratio of 18 to 1 or less. Research on small class size and adult-child ratio has found that it particularly benefits children in the younger grades.[35]

This scan looks at states' structural quality requirements for districts to determine if kindergarten is prioritized and equivalent to first grade. The scan does not look at process quality. In other words, we did not explore whether states have recommendations or requirements for developmentally appropriate curriculum, instructional strategies, and learning environments.

Full-day Kindergarten: Policy Indicators

- State requires districts to offer full-day kindergarten
- State bans districts from charging tuition for full-day kindergarten
- Minimum length of day for full-day kindergarten is equivalent to first grade
- State requires class ratio of no more than 18 to 1

Dual Language Learner (DLL) Supports

Some demographers have estimated that by 2030, nearly 40 percent of American students will speak a language other than English at home.[36] This population is growing fastest in the early years. Identifying and supporting dual language learners as early as possible is essential for their long-term success. State policies governing DLL identification, linguistic supports, and reclassification into mainstream English classrooms are frequently out of step with current research on students' academic needs. Our analysis awards points to states that have laws in place to support DLLs.

Individual states set their own rules about when a DLL student is "reclassified" (or exited) out of the DLL system. Currently, states have a wide variety of rules concerning reclassification.[37] Some states rely exclusively on the achievement of a proficient score on an English screener test, such as the ACCESS exam. A student needs only to score proficiently on this exam in order to be formally exited from the DLL system. Other states rely on multiple measures for determining reclassification. Iowa, for example, uses a combination of test scores, teacher observations, and teacher recommendations for reclassification.

Because early identification is crucial, this report looks at state policies concerning DLLs in pre-K programs. States that require pre-K programs to screen for DLLs will likely do a better job of identifying and providing early support to students. Another important factor in meeting student and parent needs in schools is recognizing families that speak a language other than English at home. Some states have parental engagement laws or regulations that take home language into account. In our scan, states earn points for both of these things.

Third Grade Reading Laws

Because of the importance of achieving reading proficiency by the end of third grade, many states have passed legislation aimed at improving third grade reading and providing targeted interventions for students struggling to reach proficiency.

Several states with third grade reading laws require that students who are not reading proficiently according

DLL Supports: Policy Indicators

- K–12 rules around native language instruction
- Funding support
- Enacted legislation that encourages family engagement among non-English fluent parents
- State-funded pre-K programs required to screen for DLLs

to state standardized reading tests must be held back in the third grade. The rationale behind these laws is that students not reading at grade level should not be promoted to fourth grade where content across the subject areas becomes more complex. However, several studies show that being retained is associated with later negative impacts, such as dropping out of high school.[38] Additionally, retention is expensive for local education agencies. Absent a clear benefit for students, retention makes little sense.

There are other ways states can help ensure that students are ready to tackle more challenging content by fourth grade. In order to intervene and help struggling readers, teachers should assess reading skills as early as possible. States can require annual assessments in pre-K and the early grades. Once struggling readers are identified, it is imperative that targeted interventions be put into place as soon as possible. Interventions can include strategies like creating academic improvement plans, establishing home reading programs, tutoring or instruction outside of school hours, and providing summer school. Some states require or recommend that schools hire a reading specialist who can provide more intensive instruction to students and/or coaching for general classroom teachers.

Many states also require that parents be made aware of their children's progress.

Our scan takes a close look at the specifics of each state's reading law with the goal of better understanding what states are doing to ensure that students are reading at a proficient level by the conclusion of third grade. States are awarded points for requiring early identification, intervention before third grade, and parent notification of student progress. States lose points for requiring third graders to be held back if they do not score proficient on state reading tests.

Third Grade Reading Laws: Policy Indicators

- State law requires annual reading assessments for students in K–3 assessment prior to K entry
- State law requires assessment prior to K entry
- State law requires intervention before third grade
- State law requires communication with families about child's reading progress
- State law requires retention
- If retention is required, students held back are assigned to a different teacher
- If retention is required, students have the opportunity for promotion if they participate in an intervention
- If retention is required, exemptions are allowed

STATE PROGRESS

The federal government's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge and Preschool Development Grants competitions have helped states accelerate early education progress. Still, policies governing B–3rd are largely unconnected and uncoordinated, leaving gaping openings in the learning staircase for children and families to fall through. This is even true in states with a "cradle to career" or "P–20" framework[39] or vision such as Delaware; states with PreK–3rd initiatives such as Minnesota, Massachusetts, and Washington; and in states with strong pre-K programs such as Oklahoma and DC. As discussed below, these states are doing well in some areas, but lacking in others. See New America's data visualization and policy analysis tool, Atlas, for maps and a digital representation of state progress.[40]

For real transformation and accelerated progress toward improving not just children's reading outcomes but also their broader development and likelihood for life success, states will need to take a comprehensive approach to improving children's B–3rd learning experiences. In the previous pages, we discussed policies that should be part of that approach; below we turn to how state policies line up with the indicators we put forth.

We grouped states in three categories:

- Walking: Making solid strides toward comprehensive B–3rd policy
- Toddling: Progress in some areas, but not in others
- Crawling: At early stages with limited progress

Walking

Five states rise to the top, as "Walkers," across all seven policy areas: New York, Oklahoma, West Virginia, Connecticut, and Wisconsin. But even among these top five, no state is running. The highest-scoring state, New York, would still only earn a "C" if we were using letter grades. This means there is a lot of work left to do in all states to truly make a difference for all children across the B–3rd continuum.

Among the Walking states is one Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge winner, Wisconsin, and two Preschool Development Grant winners, Connecticut and New York. All five states have a state-funded pre-K program and each of them has a third grade reading law. None of these states have regressive funding distributions; they all provide highest-poverty districts with equal to or more funding than low-poverty districts. All except Oklahoma have strong education spending relative to the state's economic productivity, signifying that they are prioritizing education. Oklahoma and Wisconsin are currently run by Republican governors, whereas Connecticut, New York, and West Virginia have Democratic governors. Policymakers across party lines have come to realize the importance of early learning in recent years, and support for policies that impact children from birth through third grade are expanding in red and blue states alike.

Some of the Walkers might come as a surprise, as they are not necessarily the states that often rise to the top in other state rankings. But consider the indicators included: policies that touch the B–3rd span and children's literacy development. With this in mind, it should come as little surprise that Oklahoma and West Virginia score fairly well. They each have robust state pre-K programs that include basic quality indicators. Pre-K programs in both states have low adult-child ratios, teachers are required to have a bachelor's degree with a specialization in early childhood education, and the state conducts site visits to ensure that programs follow state requirements.

But Oklahoma does not just score among the leaders in pre-K; the state also boasts the highest score in our Educator category. Oklahoma requires kindergarten teachers to have an early childhood education license and requires that both early childhood and elementary teacher candidates pass a reading pedagogy test. The state also sets a higher bar for teachers in child care centers, requiring that licensed centers have directors and lead teachers with at least some college-level coursework in early childhood education. New York also scores towards the top in this category, with similar requirements for early childhood teachers and teachers in child care centers.

New York, Oklahoma, and West Virginia each score well in the Kindergarten category. Both Oklahoma and West Virginia require full-day kindergarten under state statute. While New York does not, the overwhelming majority

Table 1

State Progress on Birth–3rd Grade Policies, by Category

Walking	New York	West Virginia
	Oklahoma	Wisconsin
	Connecticut	
Toddling	Washington, D.C.	New Mexico
	Minnesota	Georgia
	New Jersey	South Carolina
	Alabama	Mississippi
	Rhode Island	Michigan
	Maryland	Oregon
	North Carolina	Iowa
	Illinois	Maine
	Florida	Washington
	Arkansas	Colorado
	Delaware	Pennsylvania
	Ohio	Texas
	Massachusetts	Nebraska
	Indiana	Virginia
	Louisiana	California
	Tennessee	Hawaii
	Vermont	Missouri
	Alaska	
Crawling	Kansas	Idaho
	Kentucky	South Dakota
	Arizona	Wyoming
	North Dakota	New Hampshire
	Utah	Montana
	Nevada	

of its kindergarteners have access to a full-day program. New York also does not allow districts to charge tuition for kindergarten, funds full-day kindergarten when a district provides it at the same level as first grade, requires that full-day kindergarten run the same number of hours as first grade, and requires the recommended class ratio of 18 children to one adult. While not requiring districts to offer full-day kindergarten leaves it vulnerable to funding cuts and makes it appear less important than other grades, New York has provisions in place to help improve children's access to a full day of learning.

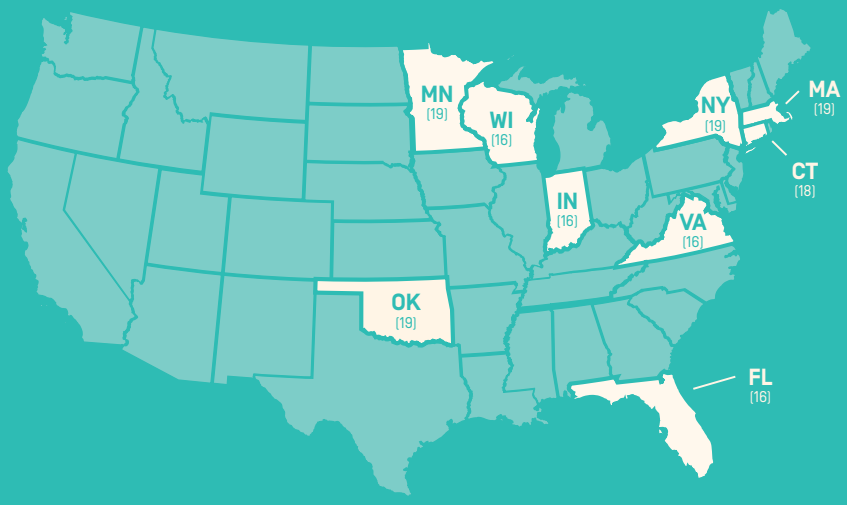
Connecticut ranks in the Walking group because of its educator policies and because it has more equitable funding structures than most other states. Connecticut funds pre-K through its school funding formula, provides a level of per-pupil funding above the national average, and has a progressive funding distribution, meaning the state has a mechanism in place to help ensure that low-income districts receive more funding than higher-income districts.

While Wisconsin is not leading in any one category, the state scores fairly well on most indicators, specifically Equitable Funding and Third Grade Reading Laws. At this time, it funds pre-K programs through the state's K–12 school funding formula. Wisconsin has a progressive funding distribution, providing its highest-poverty districts with slightly more funding than its low-poverty districts. To promote third grade reading proficiency, Wisconsin has focused on early identification of and intervention for struggling readers. The state requires annual reading assessments for students in pre-K through third grade and state law does not require retention for third grade students who do not meet grade-level expectations in reading.

The maps that follow show states that rise to the top in each individual policy area and the points they earned. To view a full, in-depth analysis of each state and its policies, please visit: **atlas.newamerica.org/crawling-to-walking**.

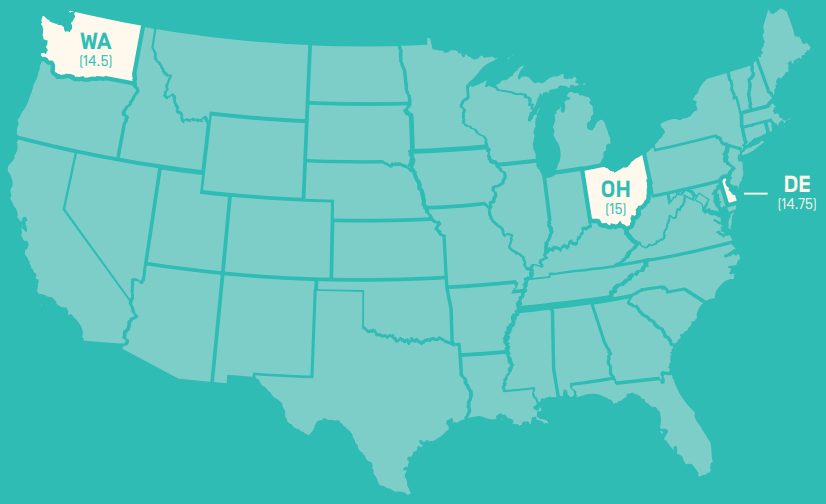
1 Educators: Teachers and Leaders

(23 Possible Points)



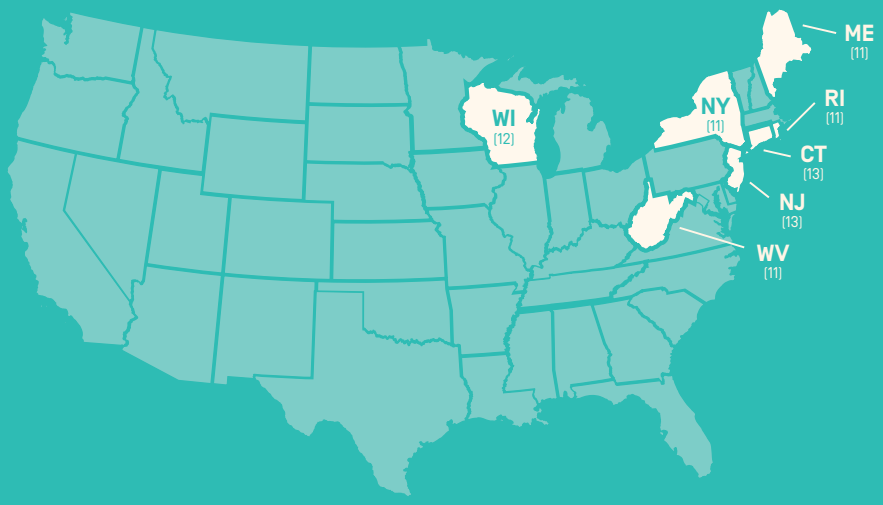
2 Standards, Assessment, and Data

(18 Possible Points)



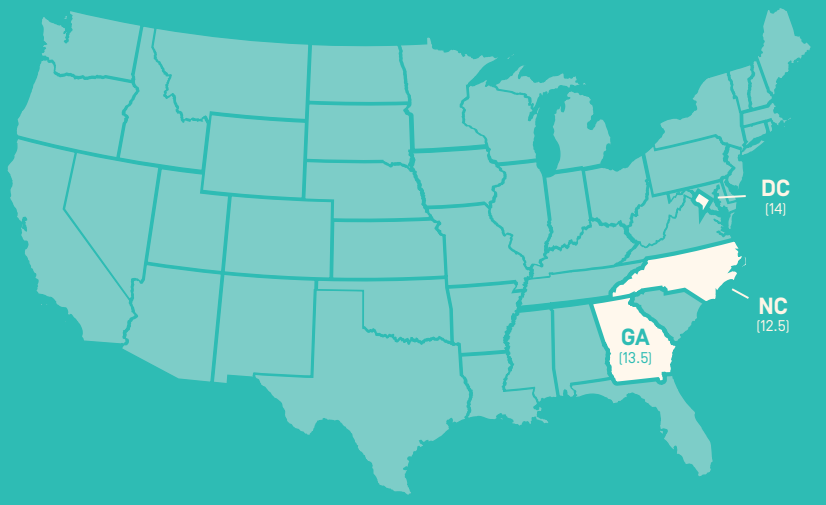
3 Equitable Funding

(18 Possible Points)



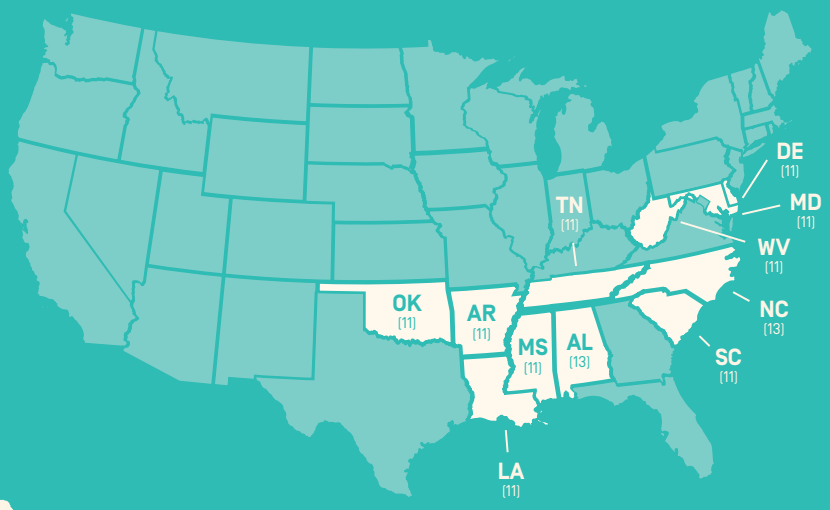
4 Pre-K: Access and Quality

(16 Possible Points)



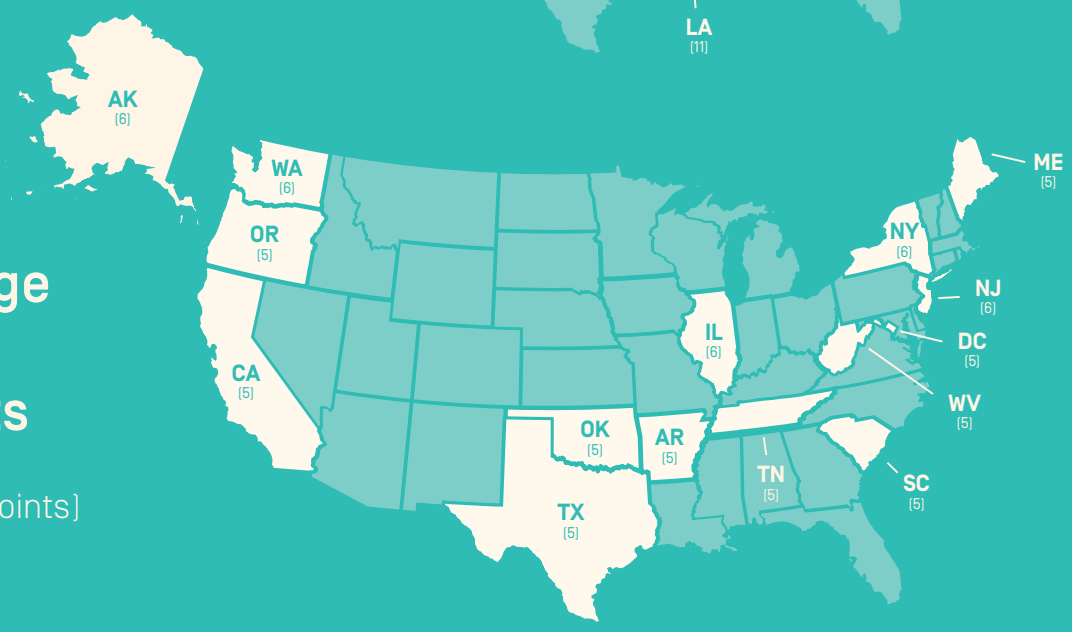
5 Full-Day Kindergarten: Access and Quality

(13 Possible Points)



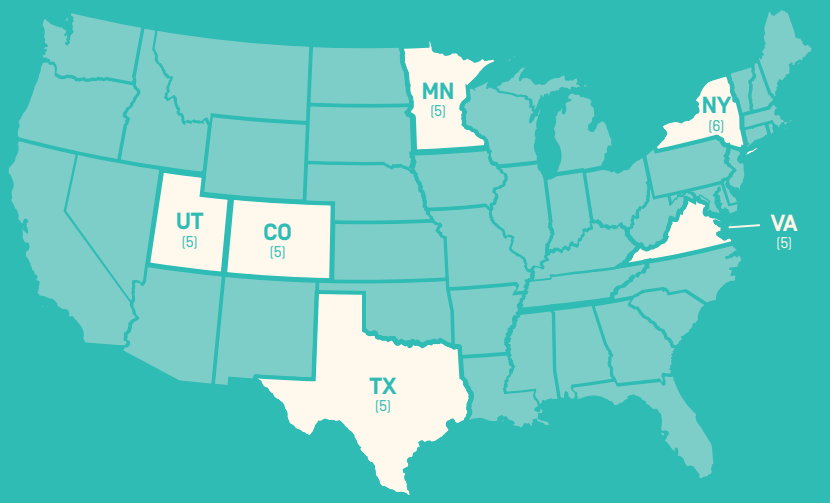
6 Dual Language Learner Supports

(6 Possible Points)



7 Third Grade Reading Laws

(6 Possible Points)



Toddling

Most states fall into the "Toddling" group. Because this category is so large, it is useful to talk about these states as those that are closer to walking more confidently and those that really just took their first step into the B–3rd space. Here is how we break this up:

Closer to Confident Walking	Just Took Their First Step
Washington, DC	South Carolina
Minnesota	Mississippi
New Jersey	Michigan
Alabama	Oregon
Rhode Island	Iowa
Maryland	Maine
North Carolina	Washington
Illinois	Colorado
Florida	Pennsylvania
Arkansas	Texas
Ohio	Nebraska
Delaware	Virginia
Massachusetts	California
Indiana	Hawaii
Louisiana	Missouri
Tennessee	
Vermont	
Alaska	
New Mexico	
Georgia	

While a few toward the top of the bunch—DC, Minnesota, Alabama, Maryland, Rhode Island, and North Carolina—are strong in multiple areas, for the vast majority that is not the case. Minnesota, for instance, scores near the middle of the pack when it comes to Pre-K, Kindergarten, and Standards, Assessments, and Data. At the same time, the state has the second highest score in the Educator category and has a strong third grade reading law. Alabama, on the other hand, scores high in Kindergarten and Pre-K, even though it serves less than 20 percent of four-year-olds and no three-year-olds in its pre-K program. The program meets most structural quality elements and with funds from the federal Preschool Development Grants program, the state will certainly be able to increase access while also maintaining high quality. Alabama, however, did poorly in the Equitable Funding category and average in Standards, Assessment, and Data. Maryland had a higher score in Kindergarten and Standards, Assessment, and Data, and North Carolina scored well in Pre-K and Kindergarten, but these states did not stand out in other areas.

New Jersey scores at the top in Equitable Funding. It funds at least one of its pre-K programs through a school funding formula and has a progressive funding distribution. And in New Jersey education makes up a large portion of state spending in relation to economic productivity. Even though the state is investing in the next generation, it fell short in the Kindergarten and Educator areas.

For the rest of the Toddlers it truly is a mixed bag, meeting some indicators, but clearly lacking on others. Massachusetts, an RTT-ELC and Preschool Development Grants state, for instance, benefits from its Educator policies focused on teachers. By virtue of the state's teacher licensing structure, kindergarten teachers hold an early childhood education license. Elementary teachers are required to have preparation in the science of reading and both early and elementary teacher candidates must pass reading pedagogy tests. Massachusetts also requires college-level coursework for both center directors and lead teachers in child care centers. In contrast, however, the state is in last place when it comes to kindergarten indicators. Massachusetts does, however, have a Quality Full-Day Kindergarten Grant program that is helping districts provide more students with a full day of learning and encouraging developmentally appropriate practice.[41] Because of the nature of our indicators, we were not able to capture this in the rankings.

Ohio, a RTT-ELC state, has the highest score in Standards, Assessment, and Data. The state has comprehensive early learning guidelines for pre-K, infants, and toddlers. It also has a common statewide kindergarten entry assessment (KEA) that covers multiple domains of learning and has requirements for kindergarten through second grade literacy and math assessments. Ohio collects some early childhood screening and assessment data and can link individual child data from some early education programs to its K–12 longitudinal data system. Ohio misses the mark in Equitable Funding, Pre-K, and Kindergarten areas.

Other RTT-ELC states like Pennsylvania and California struggle to make progress. Both are hindered by inequitable funding mechanisms. Pennsylvania has a regressive funding distribution. California has a flat funding distribution but spends less money per pupil than the national average.

Missouri just barely makes the Toddler cut-off. For pre-K, while the state serves a very small percentage of children, it does open pre-K to three-year-olds. The state requires lead pre-K teachers to have a bachelor's degree with specialized training in early childhood education and requires assistant teachers to hold at least a CDA. While Missouri did not win a Preschool Development Grant to expand its program, it did apply, signaling a desire to ramp up offerings to more families.

Crawling

The Crawlers are Kansas, Kentucky, Arizona, North Dakota, Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Wyoming, South Dakota, New Hampshire, and Montana. The majority of states in this category do not have public pre-K programs and do not require districts to provide full-day kindergarten. Some even allow districts to charge tuition for full-day kindergarten. These states do not meet most of our Educator, Standards, Assessment, and Data, or Equitable Funding indicators. They are behind every other state—or at least hovering at the bottom, in just about every area.

One exception is Utah, with its third grade reading law, which is in line with the existing research. Under Utah's law, annual reading assessments must be conducted in kindergarten through third grade, interventions for struggling readers must be provided before third grade, and retention for students reading below grade level is not required. While retention can sometimes have short-term benefits, as students advance into middle school those benefits fade. In fact, most research shows that retention can be more harmful than helpful to students'

educational trajectories. It is also costly to districts compared to other reading interventions.

Among the Crawlers, New Hampshire scored the highest in the Educator policy area and there are a few noteworthy points. The state requires both early and elementary teacher candidates to pass a reading pedagogy test, but does not require elementary teacher candidates to have preparation in the science of reading. Under child care center licensing requirements, the state requires center directors to have at least some college coursework, but lead teachers only need a high school diploma.

Kentucky is the highest scoring Crawler for Standards, Assessment, and Data. Similar to Ohio, Kentucky is stronger than many other states in assessment. It makes recommendations on pre-K assessment and has a fully implemented, statewide kindergarten entry assessment. Like several other states, Kentucky can link child level data from some early childhood programs to the state's K–12 longitudinal data system.

For the Equitable Funding category, Kansas is the best scoring Crawler. The state funds at-risk preschool-aged children through its school funding formula. Notably, Kansas reimburses child care centers for all absent days for children who receive child care subsidies. This is only the case for six other states.

For Kindergarten, Montana and North Dakota lead the Crawlers because these states do not allow districts to charge tuition for full-day kindergarten, a practice that can make kindergarten less accessible for children from low-income families.

Utah and Idaho score the highest in the DLL Supports area. Both of these states allow for various instructional methods for K–12, have family engagement laws that acknowledge families may speak another language at home, and provide funding support for language learners.

The states in this category have the most work to do, starting with creating, expanding, or improving the quality of pre-K programs and requiring and improving full-day kindergarten. The states will also need to take steps to improve the preparation of B–3rd teachers as well as principals and child care center directors. They must also consider how to best assess children's progress in pre-K and the early grades of elementary school, capture child-level data and connect it to K–12 longitudinal data systems, and improve coordination between early learning and K–12 standards. To be fair, this last point is something every state needs to consider deeply. While just about every state says there is alignment between these sets of standards, it is hard to know whether that simply means they share some of the same language and include some of the same topics within subject areas or if they are scaffolded in a way so that kindergarten learning builds on pre-K learning and so on.

Other Structures, Processes, and Policies that Matter

While the policies included in our scan are quite comprehensive, there are a number of other important policies we would have liked to include, but could not find necessary data, could not find reasonably clear research leaning toward one best practice, or could not reach a decision on what the best policy should be. These are issues to explore in more detail and to include in future scans. They include: governance, curricula, depth of standards alignment, transition between pre-K and K, teacher induction, educator professional learning, teacher endorsements, compensation parity between birth-to-five and K–3rd teachers, home visiting, and funding for specific initiatives such as third grade reading laws. For more details, see Appendix I on page 28.

THE IMPORTANCE OF IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

State leaders can establish conditions through policy that can enable district efforts to thrive or leave them to struggle. Still, those policies can only go so far. The implementation of policy is what leads to its success or failure. How well a policy is implemented depends on several factors, including how much discretion is given to districts, state capacity to support implementation, adherence to smart implementation approaches, and funding to support and sustain the desired changes. While this is not a comprehensive list of challenges, we discuss these four issues in more detail below.

District Discretion

School districts have a great deal of autonomy in local control states; often school board members or locally appointed officials make the final decisions about the implementation of school policies as opposed to state-level officials. Advocates of local control support this form of governance because it leaves those closest to students, parents, teachers, and schools in charge of policy decisions. At its best, local control allows districts to create policies that best meet the specific needs of their communities. However, there are drawbacks to this form of governance. Chiefly, it can mean that every district in the state is doing something slightly different, making it difficult to ensure equitable educational experiences for all students within the state. It also makes it complicated to compare students' opportunities and experiences in one district to those in another. Because state agencies or departments of education in local control states have diminished authority to require statewide implementation of policies, there are often an array of disjointed district policies throughout the state.

Consequently, there can be a lack of accountability at the district level and increased inequities across school districts in local control states. This can prevent proper alignment across both districts and grade levels. Some children have access to districts with high-quality public education, while others are forced to attend failing school districts with low levels of third grade reading proficiency or no access to pre-K. For example, Minnesota is a local control state where pre-K access varies from one district to the next. The state provides limited funding for district pre-K, but districts have significant discretion in program design. Some districts provide half-day pre-K for all children from low-income families, where other districts have long waiting lists or only offer summer programs. Access and quality of public pre-K programs are highly dependent on the priorities of district or school leaders in Minnesota.

A balance must be struck between state and local autonomy to implement policies so that children and families have equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities. When there is the right balance between local or school control and state control of governance there are better and more uniform outcomes for all children.

State Capacity: Time, Resources, and Expertise

Another potential challenge to successful policy implementation is a lack of state capacity. In an extensive examination of state education agencies (SEAs) conducted in 2011, the Center for American Progress concluded that they are overly focused on compliance, lacking transparency, hindered by federal funding, and difficult to reform due to bureaucratic obstacles.[42] The report found that they are often challenged by shrinking budgets and staff levels as well as a culture built around compliance rather than innovation. These challenges present significant obstacles when it comes to state capacity for implementing policies. When faced with the challenge of implementing the various mandates of No Child Left Behind, for example, many state agencies found themselves lacking the necessary resources and knowledge to successfully carry out their duties. A 2012 report found that SEAs increasingly depend on external consultants and foundations to fill this gap, raising concerns that this reliance on outside assistance could hinder the development of internal capacity.[43]

This lack of state capacity presents an ongoing challenge as SEAs are increasingly tasked with ensuring large-scale educational reform. For example, after Tennessee

won a Race to the Top grant it contracted with the U.S. Education Delivery Institute to review its SEA's capacity for implementing large-scale reform. The review found that "the organization and the work wasn't organized in a way that supported implementation...[and] reinforced that intentional change had to happen in order to improve capacity, regardless of how that would affect components, departments, and people in the agency." This led to a restructuring of the education agency beginning in April 2012.[44]

The successful implementation of B–3rd policies often requires the commitment of numerous policymakers across multiple state agencies, especially when states are implementing these policies for the first time. Building a coherent and seamless system that includes both public schools and a mixed delivery market for child care and pre-K takes a great deal of coordination and internal expertise. States must be willing and able to devote financial and other resources to these policies in order to see meaningful results for children.

Smart Approach to Implementation

While creating effective state policies is the foundation for strong student outcomes, the implementation of these policies is even more essential to ensuring that every child succeeds. States need to be strategic in their implementation if policies are to realize their full potential. When states use smart implementation approaches, they roll out new policies by first getting buy-in from key stakeholders, like teachers and administrators. Prior to statewide implementation of a new policy, states often use pilot programs to determine any unforeseen consequences or steps needed to guarantee smooth implementation. For instance, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care piloted the state's Universal Pre-K grant program in 2007 and asked for feedback from stakeholders before implementing the program statewide.[45] This allowed Massachusetts to systematically roll out the grant while measuring the new funding's impact on program and teacher quality.

Evaluation of current statewide practices allows states to understand the divide between the newest child development research and the implementation of policies.[46] When state and local policymakers work together to scale up promising interventions there is even greater potential for strong student outcomes.

Sufficient Funding to Support and Sustain Change

A dedicated, predictable, sustained stream of funding is necessary for high-quality early education to become a reality at the state level. Currently, early childhood programs are funded by various threads that are braided together in an attempt to serve as many children as financially possible.[47] Making this task more difficult is the fact that most funding sources exist independently of each other and are thus not easily integrated into one coordinated system for providing early education services.[48] This patchwork approach to funding poses the significant challenge of dealing with conflicting regulations.

Without a dedicated, stable funding stream, improvements in B–3rd education will continue to be sporadic and realized only by children residing in certain locations. For instance, in 2004 Arizona passed legislation creating a full-day kindergarten fund in an effort to increase the availability of full-day kindergarten throughout the state. However, in response to budget constraints in 2010, the funding formula was modified so that all money for full-day kindergarten was eliminated. School districts were forced to adapt to this loss of revenue by charging parents tuition for kindergarten, raising local property taxes, increasing class sizes, or reducing other areas of the school budget.[49] As a result, many children in Arizona lost access to full-day kindergarten and quality continues to vary across the state.

Massachusetts almost had a similar experience with unstable kindergarten funding. State policymakers chose to expand access to quality full-day kindergarten through a grant program for districts. This summer, Governor Charlie Baker vetoed the full-day grants in the state budget. Many districts were worried that they would not be able to continue offering full-day kindergarten to students or would have to charge tuition, but the Massachusetts legislature overturned the line-item veto. The lack of sustainable funding for full-day kindergarten created unstable access to full-day kindergarten from district to district. Dedicated funding for early education programs are imperative to maintaining and improving outcomes for students across the B–3rd continuum.

Without adequately addressing each of the above issues, policies at scale are doomed to fail. There may be policy successes in a district here or there, but there will not be systemic improvement, which ultimately leads to inequities for children, depending on where they live.

The federal government has offered numerous competitive grant opportunities in recent years that allow states, districts, and organizations to create and build early education programs. Among these programs are Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge, Preschool Development Grants, Investing in Innovation (i3), Social Innovation Fund, and Promise Neighborhoods.

While each of these grants has a different purpose, they all foster the expansion of policies that improve early learning, specifically for children from low-income families. As the grant periods begin to end, grantees will have to put plans in place to sustain the progress made without continued funding from the federal government.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Each of these policy areas is important on its own, but the most powerful impacts will be felt when they are considered together. Policies exist in context. Investing in or addressing bits and pieces of a B–3rd approach will not result in considerably better outcomes for all children. What is necessary is a coherent and connected set of policies that flow and fit together.

New America's scan shows that most states are far from this kind of alignment. States are at very different levels of progress toward a set of strong B–3rd policies that establish promising conditions at the local level. Eleven states are crawling. Thirty-four states and DC are toddling and only five are walking. No state is running. Several states are tackling pieces fairly well, but real progress will only occur when states begin to knit these discrete policies together.

Still, it is impractical to take on everything at once; states must start somewhere. In this policy scan, we emphasize teachers and leaders, equitable funding, and alignment across the birth-through-third grades. Our top priority is educators: without well-prepared and adequately supported principals, leaders of early childhood programs, K–3rd teachers, and infant, toddler, and pre-K teachers, little else is possible. This is where states must focus first.

Equally important is how state policies are implemented by non-school early childhood programs, public schools, and local education agencies. Understanding the implementation of these laws and how they fit together is an area for future research. State education agencies and related entities should work with experts and practitioners to help shape policies and think through implementation; pilot initiatives in different communities; and evaluate the success, failure, and potential consequences of those efforts. This is the only way states will reach a "personal best."

APPENDIX I: OTHER STRUCTURES, PROCESSES, AND POLICIES THAT MATTER

Governance

The way states administer education policies affecting children impacts their success. Researchers have identified three ways that states commonly govern B–3rd policies: consolidated, regionalized, and compartmentalized.[50] In states with a consolidated governance structure one agency is responsible for the majority of early education programs and services. Take Minnesota, for instance, which has an interagency Office of Early Learning that is housed in the Minnesota Department of Education. The office oversees programs and services benefiting children from prenatal through third grade.[51] In some states, authority over early education programs is regionalized, meaning that state entities have limited power and many of the decisions are left to officials at the regional or local level. Most often, though, state early education uses a compartmentalized approach where multiple state agencies and local entities oversee programs and services, often in an uncoordinated, or unaligned, manner.

While a consolidated approach seems like it would best be able to manage and align systems in this space, that is not necessarily true, depending on the state cultural, political, and economic context.[52]

Extent of Alignment of Standards and Assessments

Almost all states claim that their early learning standards align with their K–12 standards, but it is difficult to know what constitutes alignment. Many standards experts assert this alignment is only surface deep. States do side-by-side comparisons of standards that merely note the use of common language and subject areas, not whether the standards for later grades actually build on the early learning standards. Meaningful alignment of standards makes for a more seamless transition from pre-K to the elementary grades and helps to ensure that students build on and sustain their work from earlier grades.

Curricula

The use of evidence-based, age-appropriate curricula is a necessary component of any high-quality infant and toddler, pre-K, or elementary classroom. High-quality curricula can play a critical role in ensuring that children develop important social and academic skills in their early years. Recent research into preschool curricula reveals that one of the strongest hopes for improving child outcomes is intensive, developmentally-focused curricula supported by professional development and regular monitoring of student progress.[53] While high-quality standards, such as the Common Core, are essential for guiding teacher instruction, it is the curriculum that helps teachers ensure that all students master those standards. Because curricula decisions are ultimately made at the state and district level, federal policy has limited power over curricular choices. The What Works Clearinghouse, however, is one example of a federal effort to identify the effectiveness of various programs.

There is evidence to suggest that curricular choices can have a significant and positive effect on student performance, while also being less expensive than other policy levers.[54] It is essential that curricular choices be made according to independent research on effectiveness. While there has been a decent amount of research on the impact of pre-K curricula on learning outcomes, more research on elementary curricula impact is needed.

The Transition Between Pre-K and Kindergarten

A smooth, coordinated transition between pre-kindergarten and kindergarten is vital for ensuring that academic gains realized in pre-K are carried over as students enter the K–12 system. In too many school districts, however, the worlds of pre-K and K–12 education remain distinct and separate. This disconnect results in kindergarten teachers having limited information about their students' pre-K experiences and in pre-K programs missing out on important information about the success of their students once they enter the K–12 education

system. Improved coordination between pre-K programs and schools would enable kindergarten teachers to tailor their instruction earlier in the year to match the needs of their students. This coordination could also allow pre-K programs to address any issues in curriculum misalignment as they learn about how their former students progress through the kindergarten year.

Efforts to better align pre-K with elementary schools are often small-scale and locally varied. There have been some federal efforts, though, to help foster better coordination and smoother transitions for families. The Strong Start for America's Children Act, introduced in 2014, outlines several steps that can be taken to ensure a more coordinated transition between pre-K and kindergarten. Under the Act, pre-K providers must design a comprehensive plan to help bridge the gap between pre-K and kindergarten. For instance, pre-K providers would have to transfer records for each participating child to the public school where they attend kindergarten and work with elementary schools to help ensure continuity in teacher instruction.[55] The proposed changes to the Head Start Performance Standards earlier this year also encourage better alignment between Head Start programs and public elementary schools, supporting children and families with the transition from Head Start to kindergarten.[56] The federal Preschool Development Grant program also has a focus on alignment; applicants were evaluated on their ability to strengthen the B–3rd continuum, acknowledging that pre-K is not meant to be a stand-alone program. We think states can and should play a role in encouraging deeper collaboration across pre-K and K in local school districts.

Teacher Induction

In order for new teachers to gain critical skills, develop into highly effective instructors, and remain in the profession, strong induction and mentoring programs are necessary. High-quality induction programs can help accelerate professional growth and produce high-quality teachers in shorter amounts of time. Research suggests that high-quality, multi-year induction programs can decrease teacher attrition while simultaneously enhancing student learning through improved teaching. Without these sort of supports in place, many teachers struggle in isolation as they face the challenges of their first few years in the classroom and many choose to leave the profession.

State policy has a key role to play in influencing the design and scope of induction and mentoring programs. Ideally, policy would require all new teachers to receive some sort of induction support during their first two years of teaching. Currently, a majority of states require new teachers to participate in some sort of induction program, ranging from the assignment of a mentor or coach to customized professional development. The quality and comprehensiveness of these induction programs varies widely between states and school districts, however. In a 2012 poll, up to 30 percent of teachers reported never being assigned a mentor, even in states that had a mentoring requirement on paper. As of the 2011–12 school year, only 15 states had formalized induction program standards.[57] In order to develop strong and effective induction programs, states should dedicate funding towards these programs while simultaneously developing formal program standards such as an induction mandate and a rigorous mentor selection process.

Professional Development

Effective professional development is vital to ensuring that students receive high-quality instruction. When done well, professional development helps teachers to refine their craft in order to more effectively reach their students. Ongoing professional development allows teachers to learn from each other and stay up-to-date on the latest research on how children learn.

Because of its importance, states and districts spend large amounts on professional development, an average of almost $18,000 per teacher, per year in many districts.[58] Despite this significant price tag, the return on investment is lacking. A recent report found that teacher skill levels do not substantially improve from year to year, especially after their first few years in the classroom.[59] Current teacher professional development is often disjointed and lacks an overall plan or strategy. In order for professional development to translate into more effective teacher practice, schools need to adopt practices that prioritize investment in regular instructional feedback. An emphasis on continuous feedback provided by an instructional coach could be a more effective, albeit costly, way to invest in professional development and see quicker returns in the form of improved instructional practice.

States should track how local school districts are spending federal and state professional development dollars and encourage research-based approaches as well as hold up emerging practices and innovative strategies from around the state for peer learning.

Teacher Endorsements

While many states have an early childhood teacher license or certificate, many also offer endorsements that enable prospective teachers to work with children in more grade levels by meeting minimal requirements. Often the requirement is simply passing an exam. While states should not make it prohibitive for teachers who, for example, obtain an elementary license and opt to add on early childhood later, there should be requirements to observe or practice teaching younger children and meet some essential coursework standards to ensure these teachers understand how to establish high-quality learning environments and deliver instruction in the ways that young children learn best.

Compensation Parity Between Birth-to-Five and K–3rd Teachers

In order to encourage high-quality early education teachers to enter and remain in the profession, the early childhood workforce must be adequately compensated. Teacher pay is notoriously low across the board, but there is also a wide disparity in compensation between birth-to-five teachers and their K–3rd grade counterparts. In 2013, the average hourly wage for child care workers was $10.33, compared to $25.40 for kindergarten teachers. Child care workers' average annual salary that year was $21,490, compared to $56,320 for elementary school teachers. Despite growing evidence of the importance of high-quality education in the early years, the wages of child care workers grew by only one percent between 1997 and 2013, a smaller increase than that of fast food cooks.[60]

As a result of these low wages, economic stress and insecurity is endemic among child care and pre-K teachers. Even teachers with associate degrees or higher report high levels of financial stress. While numerous investigations have confirmed the link between teacher pay and the quality of service to young children, much more effort has been targeted at improving teacher preparation, professional development, and educational requirements than on improving pay and working conditions.

Policymakers and employers cannot continue to insist that these teachers have higher levels of education and training if they are not able to compensate them accordingly. In order to ensure student access to high-quality birth-to-five services, it is vital that a sustained source of public funding be identified to increase the compensation levels of child care workers.

Home Visiting

Home visiting programs have been shown to be an effective method for supporting children and families. These programs match trained professionals with parents for support during pregnancy and in the critical early years of a child's life. Typically, home visiting programs provide a combination of parenting education, health care guidance, and early intervention services. While home visiting programs are not new, in 2010 Congress established the Maternal, Infant, and Early Child Home Visiting (MIECHV) program to provide federal funds to programs targeting at-risk families from the point of pregnancy up until a child is five years old. At least 75 percent of these funds must go to programs that have been rigorously tested and researched, while states can use up to 25 percent of the funds on new, promising approaches. MIECHV was serving approximately 80,000 parents and children in all 50 states as of September 2013.

Research has shown that these home visiting programs provide an excellent return on investment: they can increase school readiness in children, increase positive parenting actions, improve child health and development, and improve family economic self-sufficiency. Recently, more schools are embracing the home visiting model by having teachers visit the homes of their students prior to or near the beginning of the school year. Much of this work is based on The Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project that began in Sacramento in 1998 and can now be found in 17 states. These home visits aim to bridge the gap between home and school by establishing a positive, working relationship between teachers and parents at the start of the school year. This emphasis on increasing parental engagement has the ultimate goal of increasing academic achievement among students. States should invest in and expand family access to these programs.

Funding for Third Grade Reading Laws

Third grade reading laws that aim to improve literacy rates often require districts to meet a host of requirements and make changes to their existing practices. Unfortunately, these laws are often unfunded mandates. For instance, Minnesota's law, Read Well by Third Grade, requires districts to develop local literacy plans, to use scientifically-based reading instruction, and to assess students in kindergarten through second grade. However, the law does not provide any additional funding to help districts strengthen their assessments or other work.[61]

School districts already struggling with limited capacity and limited funding would benefit from state guidance and resources to effectively implement such laws. This is especially important in states that require schools to retain third graders who are not proficient in reading. As far as reading interventions go, retention is an extremely expensive policy often without any real benefit to students.

APPENDIX II: MORE DETAILS ON STATE POLICY INDICATORS

Educators (23 points)

Educator Indicators: Preparation	Point Value	Sources
State has an early childhood educator license (PreK–3rd or birth–3rd)	2	NAEYC Early Childhood Teacher Certification State Profiles, February 2014
Kindergarten teachers are required to have an ECE license	2	NAEYC Early Childhood Teacher Certification State Profiles, February 2014
Requires elementary school teachers to have preparation in science of reading	2	National Council on Teacher Quality, 2014 State Teacher Policy Yearbook: Are New Teachers Being Prepared for College- and Career-Readiness Standards?, December 2014
Requires child development coursework for elementary licensed teachers	2	National Council on Teacher Quality, 2014 State Teacher Policy Yearbook: Are New Teachers Being Prepared for College- and Career-Readiness Standards?, December 2014
Elementary teacher candidates are required to pass a reading pedagogy test	3	National Council on Teacher Quality, 2014 State Teacher Policy Yearbook: Are New Teachers Being Prepared for College- and Career-Readiness Standards?, December 2014

ECE teacher candidates are required to pass a reading pedagogy test	3	National Council on Teacher Quality, 2014 State Teacher Policy Yearbook: Are New Teachers Being Prepared for College- and Career-Readiness Standards?, December 2014
Requires elementary principals to have preparation in early language and literacy development	1	Education Commission of the States, Administrator License Requirements, Portability, Waivers and Alternative Certification, 2013 CEELO, What Do We Know About Principal Preparation, Licensure Requirements, and Professional Development for School Leaders? July 2014
Requires elementary principals to have preparation in early childhood	2	Education Commission of the States, Administrator License Requirements, Portability, Waivers and Alternative Certification, 2013 CEELO, What Do We Know About Principal Preparation, Licensure Requirements, and Professional Development for School Leaders? July 2014

Educator Indicators: Evaluation	Point Value	Sources
Teachers are observed at least once every year	1	National Council on Teacher Quality, States of the States 2013, Connect the Dots: Using Evaluations of Teacher Effectiveness to Inform Policy and Practice, October 2013
State teacher evaluation systems include multiple measures	1	National Council on Teacher Quality, States of the States 2013, Connect the Dots: Using Evaluations of Teacher Effectiveness to Inform Policy and Practice, October 2013

Educator Indicators: Requirements for teachers in center-based child care settings	Point Value	Sources
Lead teachers in child care center settings are required to have at least some training (more than a high school diploma)	2	Child Care Aware, **We Can Do Better: Child Care Aware of America's Ranking of State Child Care Center Regulations and Oversight**, 2013 Update
Directors of child care centers are required to have at least some training (more than a high school diploma)	2	Child Care Aware, **We Can Do Better: Child Care Aware of America's Ranking of State Child Care Center Regulations and Oversight**, 2013 Update

Standards, Assessment, and Data (18 points)

Standards Indicators	Point Value	Sources
Comprehensive early learning standards that include infants, toddlers, and preschoolers	1.5	National Center for Children in Poverty, **Early Childhood Profiles**, 2015 American Psychological Association, **State Resources for Early Learning Guidelines Toolkit**, 2015 CEELO, **State-By-State**, 2015
K–12 college and career ready standards	1.5	Common Core State Standards Initiative, **Standards in Your State**, November 2013 Education Commission of the States, **College and Career Readiness Standards**, September 2014

K–3 ELA standards include language, literacy, communication skills, mechanics of reading	1	Common Core State Standards Initiative, **Standards in Your State**, November 2013 Education Commission of the States, **College and Career Readiness Standards**, September 2014
K–3 standards incorporate nonfiction and informational texts	1	Common Core State Standards Initiative, **Standards in Your State**, November 2013 Education Commission of the States, **College and Career Readiness Standards**, September 2014
Early learning standards mention dual language learners (beyond the introduction)	0.5	Office of Head Start, **Dual Language Learners in State Early Learning Guidelines and Standards**, 2015
Social-emotional learning standards with indicators for specific grade levels	0.5	CASEL, **Identifying K–12 Standards for SEL in All 50 States**, 2014 Education Commission of the States, **Kindergarten Standards—General Info**, March 2014

Assessment and Screening Indicators	Point Value	Sources
Developmental screenings included in state child care licensing requirements	0.5	National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education, **State Licensing and Regulation Information**, 2015
Developmental screenings included in QRIS requirements	0.5	QRIS Compendium, **State Profiles**, October 2014
Requires multiple domain assessment for state-funded pre-K	1.5	Educational Testing Service, **State Pre-K Assessment Policies: Issues and Status**, February 2012 NIEER, **The State of Preschool 2014**, 2015

Requires multiple-domain KEA	1.5	Education Commission of the States, **Kindergarten Entrance Assessments**, March 2014 CEELO, **Fast Fact: Information and Resources on Developing State Policy on Kindergarten Entry Assessment**, February 2014
Statewide KEA (common across districts)	0.5	Education Commission of the States, **Kindergarten Entrance Assessments**, March 2014 CEELO, **Fast Fact: Information and Resources on Developing State Policy on Kindergarten Entry Assessment**, February 2014
Provides recommendations or requirements for K–2 literacy and math assessment	2	Review of assessment pages on SEA websites

Data Indicators	**Point Value**	**Sources**
State-funded pre-K, child care, Head Start data part of state longitudinal data system	1	The Early Childhood Data Collaborative, **2013 State of States' Early Childhood Data Systems**, February 2014
Links child-level data across state-funded early childhood programs	1	The Early Childhood Data Collaborative, **2013 State of States' Early Childhood Data Systems**, February 2014
Collects KEA data	0.5	The Early Childhood Data Collaborative, **2013 State of States' Early Childhood Data Systems**, February 2014
Collects early childhood screening and/or assessment data	0.5	The Early Childhood Data Collaborative, **2013 State of States' Early Childhood Data Systems**, February 2014
Collects information about chronic absence	0.5	Data Quality Campaign and Attendance Works, **Monitoring Chronic Absence**, 2013

State has a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)	0.5	QRIS Compendium, **State Profiles**, October 2014 Search of state QRIS websites
QRIS rates programs on learning environment and teacher-child interactions	0.5	QRIS Compendium, **State Profiles**, October 2014 Search of state QRIS websites
QRIS rates programs on use of curriculum	0.5	QRIS Compendium, **State Profiles**, October 2014 Search of state QRIS websites
QRIS rates programs on use of child assessment	0.5	QRIS Compendium, **State Profiles**, October 2014 Search of state QRIS websites

Equitable Funding (18 points)

Equitable Funding Indicators	Point Value	Sources
At least one state-funded pre-K program is funded through the state's school funding formula	3	National Conference of State Legislatures, **Funding Pre-K Through The School Funding Formula**, April 2015
State provides per-pupil funding of at least $10,825 (U.S. average)	3	Education Law Center, **Is School Funding Fair?** A National Report Card, 2015
State has a progressive funding distribution	4	Education Law Center, **Is School Funding Fair?** A National Report Card, 2015
State's local and state spending on education in relation to the state's economic productivity	2	Education Law Center, **Is School Funding Fair?** A National Report Card, 2015

Rate of CCDF subsidy reimbursement rate is equal to or above the 75th percentile of current market rate	3	National Women's Law Center, **Turning the Corner: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2014**, 2014
Reimburses for days a child receiving CCDF subsidy is absent	3	National Women's Law Center, **In the Margins: State Child Care Assistance Policies on Provider Reimbursement**, March 2014

Pre-K (16 points)

Pre-K Indicators: Access	Point Value	Sources
State-funded pre-K program	3	NIEER, **The State of Preschool 2014**, 2015
Percentage of four-year-old children served	3	NIEER, **The State of Preschool 2014**, 2015
Percentage of three-year-old children served	1.5	NIEER, **The State of Preschool 2014**, 2015

Pre-K Indicators: Quality	Point Value	Sources
Maximum ratio 10 to 1	1	NIEER, **The State of Preschool 2014**, 2015
Full-day option of at least six hours per day, five days per week	2	NIEER, **The State of Preschool 2014**, 2015
Conducts site visits	1	NIEER, **The State of Preschool 2014**, 2015
Teacher required to hold a BA	2	NIEER, **The State of Preschool 2014**, 2015

Teacher required to have specialization in early childhood	0.5	NIEER, **The State of Preschool 2014**, 2015
Assistant teacher required to hold at least CDA	2	NIEER, **The State of Preschool 2014**, 2015

Full-day Kindergarten (13 points)

Indicators	Point Value	Sources
State requires districts to offer full-day kindergarten	3	Education Commission of the States, **District Must Offer Kindergarten**, March 2014
State bans districts from charging tuition for full-day kindergarten	4	Children's Defense Fund, **Full-Day Kindergarten In The States**, February 2013
Minimum length of day for full-day kindergarten is equivalent to first grade	4	Education Commission of the States, **Number of Instructional Days/Hours in the School Year**, March 2013
State requires class ratio of no more than 18 to 1	2	Education Commission of the States, **Teacher: Student Ratios**, March 2014

Dual Language Learner Supports (6 points)

Dual Language Learner Indicators	Point Value	Sources
K–12 rules around native language instruction	1	Education Commission of the States, **Which Program Approaches Does State Policy Authorize?**, November 2014

Funding support	2	Education Commission of the States, **State Funding Mechanisms for English Language Learners**, January 2015
Enacted legislation that encourages family engagement among non-English fluent parents	1	National PTA, **State Laws on Family Engagement in Education**, 2013
State-funded pre-K programs required to screen for DLLs	2	NIEER, **The State of Preschool 2014**, 2015

Third Grade Reading Laws (6 points)

Indicators	Point Value	Sources
State law requires annual reading assessments for students in K–3 assessment prior to K entry	1	Education Commission of the States, **Third-Grade Reading Policies**, December 2014
State law requires assessment prior to K entry	1	Education Commission of the States, **Third-Grade Reading Policies**, December 2014
State law requires intervention before third grade	2.5	Education Commission of the States, **Third-Grade Reading Policies**, December 2014
State law requires communication with families about child's reading progress	1.5	Education Commission of the States, **Third-Grade Reading Policies**, December 2014
State law requires retention	-5	Education Commission of the States, **Third-Grade Reading Policies**, December 2014
If retention is required, students held back are assigned to a different teacher	1.5	Education Commission of the States, **Third-Grade Reading Policies**, December 2014

If retention is required, students have the opportunity for promotion if they participate in an intervention	1.5	Education Commission of the States, **Third-Grade Reading Policies**, December 2014
If retetion is required, exemptions are allowed	1	Education Commission of the States, **Third-Grade Reading Policies**, December 2014

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