

P-3 BREAKOUT

BREAKOUT -

DESCRIPTION - In this breakout we will examine the role of SEAs in promoting P-3 improvement. State leaders with experience in different aspects of P-3 improvement will kick-off our discussion by sharing their reflections on one of their priority initiatives. We will review strategies states use to build P-3 capacity at the community level and identify common challenges that are emerging for the field. Participants will discuss implications and next steps for their state contexts in collaboration with colleagues.

OBJECTIVES –

- Examine promising P-3 strategies and approaches developed by leading states and communities around the country, drawing in particular on experts within each breakout group.
- Identify key challenges in supporting effective P-3 improvement.
- Gather planning ideas for addressing fragmentation and building coherent P-3 systems.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES - Participates will be able to:

- Identify key strategies states and communities use to improve outcomes P-3.
- Identify common challenges and important questions in supporting P-3 improvement in communities.
- Draw on the experience of other states in determining next steps for their specific state context.

BRIEF AGENDA

| | |
|--------|---|
| 10 min | Intros and P-3 issues/questions |
| 20 min | State spark |
| 15 min | The Role of SEAs in P-3 Improvement |
| 10 min | Whole group discussion |
| 20 min | Small group: take-always and next steps |
| 15 min | Whole group discussion and close |

P-3 BREAKOUT SESSION

Discussion Questions

1. What are the goals of your state's P-3 improvement work?
2. What P-3 bright spots can you identify in your state? How can you best take advantage of these bright spots? What can you do now that will lead to more bright spots in the future?
3. How can your state build the capacity at the local level to implement P-3 strategies?
4. At which level should your state support P-3 alignment and capacity-building: neighborhood, community, and/or region?
5. How can your state best engage school and district leaders in P-3 improvement efforts?
6. How can your state "push for impact" in its support of local P-3 efforts?
7. P-3 often begins at the prekindergarten-kindergarten "seam." How can your state encourage communities to expand the scope of their P-3 efforts over time?
8. How can your state sustain support for P-3 improvement over time?

Initiative Summary Page

| | | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Initiative #1 | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Which community and/or district goal(s) does this initiative align to? | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Early Evidence of Impact (monthly): | Short Term Evidence of Impact (quarterly): | Long-term Impact (Annual): | | |
| | | | | |
| Strategies | Lead | Resource Requirements | Completion Date | |
| 1. | | | | |
| 2. | | | | |
| 3. | | | | |
| 4. | | | | |
| 5. | | | | |

Executive Summary

The first eight years of life, beginning before birth and continuing through third grade, are a critical developmental period that sets the stage for future success. Research over the past 15 years has demonstrated the importance of high-quality care and education throughout the prenatal-through-third-grade (P–3) continuum, including prenatal and infant and toddler care, preschool education, and early elementary education. The programs and services provided to young children and their families during these early years are typically highly fragmented in most communities in the United States, the result of a multiplicity of funding streams and the wide variety of early education settings, services, and professional roles that characterize the mixed-delivery system in the United States.

Communities, states, and the federal government are all working to improve quality and coherence across the P–3 continuum. This report provides three case studies to address a central question: How can states support P–3 system building at both state and local levels? The three case-study states—Massachusetts, Oregon, and Pennsylvania—were chosen based on their experience implementing P–3 state policies and developing significant grant programs to fund regional and local P–3 partnerships. A snapshot of each state is provided in the table below.

Summary of Key Elements of P–3 Efforts: Three States

| | Oregon | Pennsylvania | Massachusetts |
|---|--|---|---|
| Agency | Early Learning Division of the Oregon Department of Education (director and board appointed by governor) | Office of Early Learning and Development (joint office of the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Department of Human Services) | Massachusetts Departments of Early Education and Care, Elementary and Secondary Education, and Higher Education (formally linked within a Secretariat and by a P–3 advisory council) |
| P–3 Components | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early learning hubs • Aligned early learning standards • Kindergarten entry assessment • Career lattice and registry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligned early learning standards • Kindergarten entry assessment • P–3 framework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligned early learning standards • Kindergarten entry assessment • Birth–3rd Foundation document • Comprehensive policy agenda (planned) |
| P–3 Community Partnership Priorities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten readiness skills and smooth transitions • Family engagement • Professional development for early learning and elementary school professionals • Alignment, connection, and collaboration in the P–3 system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family engagement • Continuity and pathways across the continuum • Data-driven improvement across the continuum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice within eight categories (Coffman & Kauerz, 2012; Kauerz & Coffman, 2013) • Required community-wide leadership alignment team |

Summary of P–3 Partnership Themes and Patterns

A number of themes and patterns emerged from the comparison of approaches across the three case-study sites.

- **New State Structures and Collaboration Patterns.** Embracing a P–3 focus has led to increased collaboration across state agencies—specifically across early childhood, K–3 education, and health offices—in all three case-study states. This collaboration is carried out through both new formal structures and informal work arrangements.
- **Two-Pronged Approaches: State Policy and Local Support.** All three case-study states are pursuing a two-pronged approach to P–3 system building that includes both state policy development and programs to encourage local P–3 efforts. Regarding policy, all three states have devoted considerable resources to aligning state standards from pre-Kindergarten through third grade.
- **P–3 System Building at Regional, Community, and Neighborhood Levels.** The three case-study states have funded P–3 work at overlapping, yet nonetheless different, geographic levels: regional, community, and/or neighborhood–feeder system. In effect, they have defined “local” in different ways.
- **Pushing for Impact.** P–3 partnerships in all three states have developed local strategies and implemented them, leading to a great deal of promising programming activity. Leaders across the states also acknowledge that to meaningfully raise student achievement, partnerships will need to deepen their work through system building and sustained coaching and professional learning.
- **Planning, Flexibility, and Emergent Strategies.** Related to the need for system building and impact are a cluster of issues regarding planning, flexibility, and emergent strategies. Across all three states, communities that already had a good sense of their needs and had developed thoughtful, coherent plans in their proposals were able to “hit the ground running.” As expected, communities are finding the need at times to adapt their plans to changing circumstances, and some report taking advantage of unplanned opportunities that emerge in the course of carrying out their work.
- **School–Community Collaboration: Progress and Challenges.** State and community officials agreed that school–community collaboration in early stage P–3 efforts was often challenging, but also that it improved significantly in many communities over time. Participants in all three states emphasized the importance of gradually building trust and relationships as partnership work developed.
- **The Pre-Kindergarten–Kindergarten “Seam” as a Common Starting Point.** While all three case-study states define the P–3 continuum as beginning before or at birth, communities typically begin their P–3 initiatives with activities that bring together community-based preschools and elementary schools for collaboration around transitions, family engagement, and joint professional learning.
- **Sustaining Local P–3 Partnerships.** Sustaining grant-funded initiatives is a persistent challenge in state–local funding relationships, and state support for local P–3 partnerships is no exception.
- **Balancing SEA Oversight and Local Flexibility in P–3 System Building.** The three case-study states’ experiences supporting local P–3 partnerships highlight the important role state departments of education play in overseeing P–3 grants, providing technical assistance to grantees, and encouraging learning and networking opportunities across communities.

For additional detail regarding these themes and patterns, see page 21.

Summary of Recommendations

1. States committed to P–3 alignment will need to develop new structures and new working arrangements in order to coordinate state policy and support local and regional P–3 efforts.
2. Building P–3 systems entails both statewide policy direction and support of local initiatives. States engaging in P–3 system building should align these two levels of activity. States should monitor the interaction of their P–3 policy initiatives and their support for local system building in order to maximize the mutually reinforcing impact of both levels of P–3 work.
3. States should be deliberate about the level at which they want to support P–3 alignment and capacity building: regional, community, and/or neighborhood–feeder system. Each has different implications, particularly for creating structures for cross-sector work and sustainability.
4. States should support local P–3 partnerships in crafting coherent strategies and employing disciplined, flexible plan-management approaches, taking advantage of new approaches to developing strategies and managing cross-sector partnerships.
5. States should engage school and district leaders in P–3 efforts by sharing information on the value of improving early learning, providing leadership development opportunities, hosting professional learning networks, and creating incentives for school and district participation.
6. States should differentiate their funding and technical assistance support to local communities, taking both the history of collaboration and community context into account.
7. States can support communities in learning from the considerable experience other communities have developed in aligning learning, teaching, and development across community-based preschools and Kindergarten. They should also support communities in expanding beyond pre-Kindergarten–Kindergarten collaboration. Over time, communities should also focus attention on improving the quality of grades 1–3 as well as services for children ages 0–3.
8. States should determine how they will support communities in sustaining their P–3 system-building work. Options include working towards obtaining ongoing legislative support and helping communities in sustainability planning, such as providing technical assistance to communities on reallocating funds to support P–3 work.
9. States should continue to fine-tune, perhaps in communication with like-minded states, how they balance their regulatory roles, their technical assistance functions, and the aim of local flexibility when supporting local P–3 efforts.

For additional explanation of these recommendations, see page 26.

The case studies profiled in this report demonstrate the crucial roles SEAs can play in supporting P–3 system building—both through state policy as well as by supporting local and regional early learning partnerships. Carrying out this work requires that SEAs align their work internally across divisions and units while building the capacity of communities to design and implement quality improvement and alignment activities.

