

Policy Brief:
**The State of Early Learning in ESSA:
Plans and Opportunities for Implementation**



Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes

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INTRODUCTION

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was signed into law late in 2015, gives state education agencies (SEAs) the opportunity to bring early learning to the forefront of their education strategies. The early years in a child’s life form the foundation for future learning and development. Access to high-quality educational opportunities during the early years can prevent achievement gaps and yield short-term and long-term benefits for students. ESSA greatly increases state flexibility around school accountability and improvement strategies. In so doing, it provides opportunities for SEAs to integrate early learning into their long-term goals, school improvement systems, and educator professional development efforts.

All SEAs have submitted their ESSA plans to the U.S. Department of Education (ED). ESSA plans are an important milestone for SEAs in their ongoing work to address educational inequities, raise performance, and close achievement gaps, in early learning and beyond. The plans provide a window into some promising and innovative approaches to early learning, including those impacting children with disabilities and Head Start, which SEAs must now translate into implementation.

Building early learning in these policy areas is new for most SEAs, and state education leaders—including chiefs, accountability directors, and early learning directors—wanted additional guidance and assistance as they move forward. In response, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) created a number of resources for SEAs, including a [Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework](#), a [guide](#) to state leadership opportunities, [webinars](#) for state leaders, and a [blog series](#) on ESSA and early learning.

All SEAs mentioned early learning or school readiness in their state plans in some way, though each SEA put more or less emphasis on intentional strategies to integrate early learning in their plan. This is a sign that SEAs understand the importance of the ESSA plans thus far. We hope the examples in this brief will encourage SEAs to expand their commitment to early learning as a key strategy for closing achievement gaps and improving educational outcomes. Today’s state plans will form the backbone of ESSA implementation, but these plans are just the beginning of SEAs’ work. This means sharing

What do we mean by “early learning”?

State education agencies have varying levels of oversight for programs serving children under kindergarten age. In the context of state ESSA plans, very few SEAs address early learning before pre-K. Thus, most proposals covered in this brief focus on pre-K to third grade. Access to high-quality early childhood education before children reach pre-K is still extremely relevant to SEAs’ goals. In the long term, SEAs should aim for an aligned birth through third grade approach that includes pre-K, Head Start, Early Head Start, child care providers, and elementary schools.

ideas and best practices among SEAs will be an ongoing project. Some SEAs have already issued [implementation guidance](#) to build upon their plans and several SEAs may phase-in new quality indicators in future years.

This brief reviews state plans submitted to the U.S. Department of Education as of October 1, 2017. It focuses on three key topics for early learning in ESSA: setting clear goals and policy priorities for early learning, integrating early learning into school improvement, and supporting early childhood educator development.¹ Each of these topics has significant potential for impact on early learning if implemented well at the local level:

- 1. Setting clear goals and policy priorities for early learning:** Improving access to high-quality early learning from birth to third grade is linked to improved outcomes for students. Achieving these outcomes requires clear goals, sustained commitment, and strategic action across multiple agencies, stakeholders, and leaders at every level of education. ESSA plans can support and communicate a state’s goals and priorities around early learning, and ensure that the early grades are a central priority in multiple parts of a state’s educational improvement strategies.
 - Does the state plan include improving early learning as a state goal or key strategy?
 - Is early learning embedded in multiple sections of the state plan in a way that demonstrates the state’s goals, policy agenda, and priorities around early learning?

- 2. Integrating early learning into school improvement:** If early learning is a key part of elementary school improvement strategies, schools will be more likely to succeed at closing gaps and raising performance early, before students need extensive remediation. ESSA is a key lever for integrating early learning strategies into school improvement plans, because state ESSA plans set out proposals for identifying and supporting low-performing schools.
 - Does the state propose to use indicators that include students under third grade as part of its school quality rating and improvement efforts under ESSA?
 - Does the state address any of the four key school improvement opportunities—school quality ratings, interventions and supports for low-performing schools, transparency and public reporting, and/or school district accountability and improvement, as described in the [Birth to Third Grade Indicator Framework](#)?

¹ We acknowledge that there are other important areas that impact effective early learning that are not mentioned in this brief, such as coordination, transition activities, and support for special populations. We intend to address these topics as we learn more about implementation of ESSA plans.

3. Supporting early childhood educator development: Quality teaching is the top in-school factor in students' success. This is especially important in pre-K to third grade, as students build the foundation of knowledge and skills that will support them in the future. Teachers and principals should have support and professional development opportunities to deliver high-quality learning experiences for young children.ⁱ Developing the educator workforce for children ages birth through eight is a challenge all SEAs must work to address.

- Does the plan [include](#) targeted professional development opportunities for teachers of young children, from birth through third-grade?
- Does the plan include specialized training or support for principals and/or other building leaders on child development, school readiness and early learning instruction and practice?

The examples below are not fully exhaustive, but are meant to highlight a variety of approaches from different SEAs, and identify areas for further growth and attention as SEAs shift their focus to implementation. It is also important to note that the format of the state plan templates may be a limiting factor, and the required elements of the plans may not reflect the breadth of SEAs' work around early learning. See **Appendix A** for a summary of the methodology used to review plans, and **Appendix B** for a high level summary of how and where each state plan addresses early learning.

EARLY LEARNING IN STATE ESSA PLANS

Setting clear goals and policy priorities for early learning

A state plan that includes clear goals and policy priorities around early learning communicates a strong message to schools and other stakeholders: this state values children's success from the start. ESSA clearly acknowledges the importance of early learning throughout the law, however there are very few requirements to address early learning in the SEA's ESSA plan. Importantly, many SEAs included early learning improvement as part of their long-term goals and state strategies. These SEAs are noted in Appendix B.

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The widespread inclusion of early learning in state priorities demonstrates a promising and important commitment to early learning. A few SEAs went even further by integrating

early learning as a top policy priority throughout the SEAs' plans. These SEAs will enter the implementation phase of ESSA with a strong framework to broaden and deepen their work on early learning.

Delaware, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Tennessee are selected examples of SEAs that demonstrated clear goals around early learning, including an emphasis on early learning in [multiple parts](#) of their ESSA plans.

- **Delaware** put “high-quality early learning opportunities” front and center as one of the state’s top five priorities. The state’s ESSA plan links with the Delaware Early Learning Council Strategic Plan, which set goals around health, high-quality early learning programs, aligned birth through third grade systems, and sustained improvement. The state also:
 - Identifies multiple federal funding streams to support goals.
 - Offers technical assistance around early learning for schools.
 - Offers targeted professional development for early educators.
 - Focuses on curriculum and assessment alignment between early learning programs and K-12.
 - Requires local districts to report expanded data for state report cards on early learning indicators, including early learning programs in close proximity to local districts in state report cards.
- **New Mexico** emphasizes early learning in its state ESSA plan and SEA strategic plan. The state highlights goals for increasing kindergarten readiness and closing opportunity gaps for young children. It also places an emphasis on early elementary school as an opportunity to narrow achievement gaps, with kindergarten through second grade diagnostic and screening measures, and after school and extended learning opportunities. In the ESSA plan, the state:
 - Offers a comprehensive array of technical assistance strategies for schools related to early learning.
 - Uses multiple data tools to track and improve early performance, including classroom observations and early literacy assessments.
 - Includes K-3 students in multiple parts of school quality ratings, including future plans for school climate surveys.
 - Plans to develop an open-source K-6 reading curriculum
- **Oklahoma**, a national leader in early childhood education for nearly two decades, has included an ambitious goal for kindergarten readiness in its state

ESSA plan and 8-Year Strategic Plan. By aligning early childhood education and learning foundations to ensure at least 75 percent of students are “ready to read” by kindergarten, the state is emphasizing the critical partnership between families and early childhood teachers to achieve education readiness and, ultimately, success. The ESSA plan includes:

- o A “start early” equity trait emphasizing the importance of investing in the youngest learners.
- o Longitudinal data to document the effects of universal Pre-K on all student groups.
- o Strong and diverse public-private partnerships to support coordination of early childhood providers and expand mixed delivery of PreK in assisted living centers, tribal early childhood centers, universities, and others.
- o Oklahoma Academic Standards vertically aligned beginning in Pre-K.
- o Rich professional development opportunities for early education teachers and early learning-focused PD for administrators.
- o A pathway for early learning paraprofessionals to become lead teachers.
- **Tennessee** showed a strong commitment to early learning in the state plan, which is one of their top five statewide focus areas. The state also supports early learning in the organizational structure of the SEA. In the ESSA plan, the state:
 - o Offers targeted professional development for pre-K to third grade educators.
 - o Created comprehensive assessment and data tools for early grades.
 - o Includes early learning as a school improvement strategy.
 - o Emphasizes early learning in state funded research.

These multi-pronged approaches are promising because they set the stage for ongoing commitments to early learning throughout a state’s work under ESSA. It shows stakeholders that the state sees early learning as a critical piece of student success across different policy areas.

Integrating early learning into school improvement

School improvement strategies make up a large part of state ESSA plans. Key elements include how SEAs will identify low-performing schools, support schools to improve achievement of students, and report cards on school results. Improving access to high-quality learning opportunities in pre-K to third grade (and earlier) can close achievement gaps early and put students on a trajectory to greater success. Some SEAs

described early learning strategies to drive improvement in low-performing schools, and expanded reporting and data sharing around early learning.

The first school improvement opportunity is around school quality ratings, which determine which schools are subject to improvement processes. ESSA requires SEAs to identify at least one indicator of “school quality or student success,”ⁱⁱ which could include early grades. Including early grades in one or more elements of these ratings emphasizes that early learning is an indispensable component of school quality, and encourages schools to prioritize pre-K to third grade results.

A common school quality indicator included in SEA’s ESSA plans is chronic absenteeism.² Over 30 SEAs chose some measure of chronic absenteeism as a component of their school quality ratings.ⁱⁱⁱ SEAs that included early absenteeism align with research showing that absenteeism rates are quite high in early grades, and that children who are chronically absent in kindergarten perform worse in later grades.

Absenteeism can be an early warning indicator for later academic problems and dropping out, and a contributor to academic achievement gaps.

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Almost all these SEAs will measure chronic absenteeism starting from kindergarten, though a few states will begin in PreK. For example, **Rhode Island** has proposed a “Chronic Absenteeism Indicator” that will examine the percentage of teachers and students who are chronically absent in grades PreK-twelve. **Illinois** is considering weighting chronic absence in kindergarten through grade 2, to stop any snowballing of patterns of chronic absence that are often begun early in student’s school experience and have much more significant consequences.^{iv}

A few other SEAs will use school climate surveys, while more plan to research these measures and phase them in over time. These surveys capture multiple non-academic dimensions of the school environment, such as discipline, student engagement, and school culture. It was not always clear in state plans whether these survey tools will include students, parents, and teachers in early grades, but most begin surveying students in fourth or fifth grade. Appropriate, high-quality survey tools for younger students could be a valuable tool to bring cross-grade coherence and alignment to school culture initiatives in elementary schools. **Colorado** and **New Mexico** are among the SEAs investigating these kinds of surveys for younger grades.

² Chronic absenteeism is usually defined as the percentage of students out of school for more than 10 percent of the school year.

SEAs with other proposals for incorporating early learning in their school quality ratings include:

- **The District of Columbia** will include scores from the pre-K Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) in its elementary school ratings. CLASS measures teacher-student interactions across three domains: instructional support, emotional support, and classroom environment.
- **Ohio** proposed a kindergarten through third grade literacy component as part of their school quality ratings and report cards. This indicator is based on student improvement relative to grade level on an annual literacy diagnostic in kindergarten through second grade, and third grade student performance on state reading tests.
- Other ideas are still in development: **New York** will consider kindergarten and pre-K access as quality indicators, and **Maryland** plans to develop kindergarten-to-second-grade end-of-year benchmarks.

The second school improvement opportunity is evidence-based [support for low-performing schools](#). Once SEAs identify schools with low overall performance and/or wide achievement gaps, districts and SEAs must support and oversee school improvement with [evidence-based interventions](#). This policy area is rich with potential for early learning, and there are some good examples of schools that integrated effective early learning strategies in their school improvement approach.^v SEAs can require that schools analyze data about students prior to third grade, which should help inform the design of improvement strategies. Early learning strategies and data can be incorporated into struggling schools’ needs assessments, intervention plans, or ongoing progress monitoring, with the appropriate metrics and caution to ensure that data collected on young children is analyzed and used appropriately.^{vi}

Notably, SEAs must [take](#) “more rigorous actions” if low-performing schools do not improve within a maximum of four years. Historically, improvement has been defined as raising scores on accountability assessments delivered in third grade and subsequent grades. In chronically low-performing schools, SEAs have greater ability to prescribe improvement strategies, such as expanded access to high-quality pre-K. Several SEAs mentioned early learning as a potential avenue for state action in these cases. Early learning was also mentioned around “[resource allocation reviews](#),” which SEAs must conduct in districts serving large groups of students in low-performing schools. These reviews could encourage schools and districts to allocate more resources to early learning.

Some examples of SEAs that specifically mention early learning in the context of school supports and interventions include:

- **Arkansas** may direct persistently low-performing schools and districts to allocate more federal funding toward pre-K quality and access.
- **Colorado** will provide schools with guidance on evidence-based interventions to improve kindergarten through grade three literacy and require individual plans for young students reading below grade level, alongside a competitive early literacy grant program, which are outlined both in state law and the ESSA plan.
- **Connecticut** includes both early learning and school climate as evidence-based intervention strategies in their system of support for schools. Cross-divisional teams at the SEA, in partnership with the state child serving agency, the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood, are developing evidence-based guidance to support school improvement, school needs assessment tools, and guidelines for pre-K-to-K transition.
- **Ohio** plans to make kindergarten to third grade readiness a required part of the needs assessments for low-performing schools. The state may also ask schools to allocate federal funding toward early learning access and quality improvement.
- **Oklahoma** responding to research that indicates early reading difficulties can lead to negative high school and adult outcomes, is providing a support structure to ensure reading readiness and proficiency in early grades. Support includes tools for screening reading deficiencies, progress monitoring, and strategies for providing tiered intervention as needed. Between kindergarten and third grade, students are also screened in phonemic awareness, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension to ensure on-grade-level skills by third grade.
- **Pennsylvania** has developed tools to support low-performing schools in the areas of kindergarten transition, family engagement, and school readiness.
- **Rhode Island** will award "School Improvement Innovation Grants," with pre-K to third grade as a competitive priority.

The third opportunity for school improvement is transparency and public reporting. For the first time, ESSA requires SEAs to publish public-facing school "report cards" with specific data points on student performance, demographics, funding, and to include the number and percentage of children enrolled in preschool on report cards, along with school spending. Many other indicators around early learning access, academics, and engagement may not be appropriate in a ratings context, but could be valuable in a public report card. This could be because there are not yet sufficiently reliable measures, or the indicator is too closely correlated with other factors like budget and demographics. It might also be that the interpretation and use of the indicator are not yet well understood in the state. In these cases transparency and public reporting can be a way to build awareness around an indicator and keep schools and families

informed on important early learning metrics, but without high stakes. Several SEAs committed in their ESSA plans to expand reporting around early learning:

- **Pennsylvania** has connected their early childhood and K-12 data systems, and will use this information to better understand and improve transitions between pre-K and kindergarten.
- **Washington** reports results from the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) at the state and district level on their state report card. The state will help school districts and community early learning providers use data from WaKIDS to inform collaborative work.
- **Arizona** has linked early childhood databases to the state K-12 longitudinal data system, and is working to develop a kindergarten developmental inventory for this system, so schools and families will have aligned birth to third grade information.

The fourth opportunity around school improvement is district accountability. This includes the systems that SEAs use to monitor school *districts* and the systems that local districts use to monitor and improve their schools. Because school districts have substantial power in early learning resource allocation and decision making, this can be an important area for SEAs to address in their guidance and implementation support. School districts' role in early learning is especially important because districts are better positioned to form relationships with community-based early childhood education programs. Many SEAs referenced school districts as the focus of their state plans, but clear connections with a district-wide early learning approach are still emerging.

- **Massachusetts** will create accountability profiles for school districts. While they do not explain the early learning implications of this choice in detail, it's possible that these profiles could include additional data on early learning quality, access, and resources at a community level.
- **Washington** will work to increase school district understanding of the importance of early learning, and help school districts connect with local early learning providers around kindergarten transitions and alignment.
- **Connecticut** requires school districts to conduct an early childhood landscape analysis in the district plan for improvement.

Supporting early childhood educator development

High-quality early learning requires a workforce of highly skilled educators and program leaders.^{vii} One landmark change in ESSA was that early childhood educators were explicitly included in programs and funding streams designed for educator professional development. Guidance from ED shows many ways in which federal

funding streams can support early childhood educators, whether teachers are based in schools, Head Start programs, or community-based child care centers.^{viii} As publicly funded early learning programs expand, elementary school principals and other program leaders can also benefit substantially from support, development, and training around early learning.^{ix}

Several SEAs mentioned targeted training, coaching, and other supports for pre-K to third grade educators in the context of their plans for educator development.

SEAs that stood out emphasized targeted, job-embedded professional development opportunities and considered alignment between schools and community-based early learning programs. A few SEAs also addressed school and program leaders' needs as early learning teacher supervisors and school improvement leaders. For educator development plans to be effective, the details of implementation will be key. Many common professional development approaches, such as short-term workshops, rarely translate into improvements for students.^x State education leaders are taking into account the unique needs of the birth to third grade workforce as they design or revise professional development systems.^{xi} Promising state examples include:

- **Mississippi** offers professional development for early childhood educators in schools, Head Start sites, and community-based programs. Regional trainings and coaching supports focus on topics such as developmentally appropriate classroom practices, school readiness, and standards-based instruction in early childhood.
- **Michigan** is developing a professional development system for birth to third grade educators, and is encouraging districts to include community-based early childhood educators in joint professional learning opportunities.
- **Pennsylvania** is building out career pathways for early childhood educators, and will award grants for principals to focus on early learning.
- **Oregon** will target their professional development efforts at pre-K to third grade educators, provide formative assessments to guide instruction, and foster stronger alignment between community early learning providers and elementary schools.
- **North Carolina** is developing a cross-agency birth to third grade professional development system, which will include both teachers and leaders in schools and other early learning settings.

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NEXT STEPS AND FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES

State ESSA plans mark a new era of state systems of support and educational improvement, and for plans to be most effective and equitable, they must consider students at every age.

As the examples above show, SEAs are taking steps towards meaningfully including early learning in PreK-12 improvement systems. High-quality early learning, from birth to third grade, can form the foundation of the state's commitment to educational excellence and equity. However, there is much more work to be done to support deep and sustainable implementation of effective early learning policy at the local level. Other SEAs can learn from their peers' plans and actions over the next year as implementation takes hold, and continue to engage in dialogue and reflection on how to best support for early learning priorities. Because these policy areas represent uncharted paths in many ways, SEAs should be thoughtful about gathering feedback and adjusting their implementation over the years to reflect their ongoing learnings. Even in states that have not explicitly embedded ECE in their ESSA plans, there are still many opportunities in the coming months to allocate resources to support early learning as part of their school improvement strategy.

ESSA will be a major focus of CEELo's technical assistance to SEAs as they deepen their work around early learning in the context of ESSA in the coming year. CCSSO has already organized collaboratives and peer learning opportunities for state leaders around specific opportunities for early learning and ESSA. Through our work with SEAs we will continue to identify additional areas of need for resources and guidance. For example, this brief did not delve deeply into other important policy areas under ESSA that impact young learners, such as how SEAs can support the needs of young English learners.

These federal plans provide insight into how SEAs will integrate early learning into their overall education strategies, but SEAs' work will not end in the planning stages. SEAs must evaluate, monitor, and adjust their approaches as plans go into effect. As plans and systems evolve, we hope SEAs will commit to creating more effective statewide systems of high-quality early learning, from birth through third grade, in order to better serve all young students.

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

To review state plans for this brief, we looked at the version of each state plan that was most recently updated as of October 1, 2017. We used the following general method to look for early learning highlights in state plans:

- Read the following sections: introduction, school quality ratings, interventions for low-performing schools, educator professional development, and pre-K to kindergarten transitions.
- Additional keyword searches for “early,” “ECE,” “pre-K/preK,” “preschool,” “kindergarten,” “third,” and “P-3”

Sections sometimes varied because not every state used the same template or format for their plans. Two required elements of state plans which touched on early learning were outside the scope of this brief: Homeless children’s access to public preschool programs under 722(g)(1)(F) of the McKinney-Vento Act, and provision of services to migratory children until Title I, Part C of ESSA.

Appendix B briefly summarizes early learning findings in each state plan at a high level to provide a snapshot of the SEA’s ESSA plan in seven areas. Columns and highlighting in blue correspond to the key topics and opportunities discussed above:

- *Goals:* These SEAs included an explicit state goal or set of strategies around early learning quality or access as part of their plan.
- *Quality indicator:* These SEAs included students below third grade in at least one part of their school quality rating system
- *School support:* These SEAs included early learning as a part of school improvement strategies for low-performing schools
- *Reports and data:* These SEAs commit to reporting and transparency around early learning, or plan to introduce new early learning data
- *School districts:* These SEAs emphasize the role of school districts in early learning, and/or have plans for school district level early learning action
- *Educator development:* These SEAs targeted birth to third grade educators and school leaders for targeted professional development opportunities
- *Other:* These SEAs propose something else interesting or notable around early learning that does not fit into this framework, such as introducing new assessment tools for teachers in early grades, or working to increase collaboration between schools and communities around early learning.

APPENDIX B: STATE PLAN SUMMARIES

This chart provides a brief snapshot into how each state addressed seven areas within their ESSA state plan that could impact early learning strategies. Readers can peruse the chart to identify state and/or topical areas to probe deeper in reading the SEAs plan and/or further researching the state’s [ESSA website](#) to identify additional resources.

All state plans as submitted/approved [listed here](#).^{xii}

State	Early Learning Highlights	Early Learning Opportunity Areas						
		Goals	Quality Indicator	School Support	Reports and Data	School Districts	Educator Devel.	Other
AL	Includes chronic absenteeism in school quality ratings, will encourage schools to use federal funds for pre-K, kindergarten access							
AK	Emphasizes reading by third grade in quality ratings, encourages interim assessments in early grades, school improvement process inclusive of early learning strategies							
AZ	Proposes K-2 accountability rubric, targeted professional development system for early childhood educators, links between early childhood education and K-12 data systems							
AR	Planned use of K-2 formative and interim assessments in the future, highlights pre-K access as a school improvement strategy, chronic absenteeism in school quality ratings							
CA	Includes chronic absenteeism in school quality ratings, emphasizes school district role in improvement and coordination between school districts and early education providers in the community							
CO	Focus on building pre-K to third systems, professional development system for birth to third workforce, pre-K to third needs assessments required by law as part of school improvement, expanding available performance measures							
CT	Evidence-based practices in early learning as a school improvement strategy, training for pre-K to third teachers in social and emotional learning, requires landscape analysis of early learning providers in each community, K-3 literacy initiative							

State	Early Learning Highlights	Early Learning Opportunity Areas						
		Goals	Quality Indicator	School Support	Reports and Data	School Districts	Educator Level.	Other
DE	Long term goals around early learning focused on birth to third grade systems, targeted professional development for birth to third teachers, expanded reporting.							
DC	Includes several pre-K to third grade measures in quality ratings, including re-enrollment, teacher-student interaction, absenteeism, plan to add more							
FL	School district report cards include early learning, common kindergarten readiness screeners, requires locally developed systems for literacy diagnostics, voluntary pre-K							
GA	Includes climate rating and absenteeism in school quality ratings, emphasizes well-rounded curriculum, performance contract approach to LEA accountability, focusing efforts on pre-K workforce development, formative assessments							
HI	Early learning part of state strategic plan, chronic absenteeism in school quality ratings, school improvement system includes early learning indicators							
ID	Uses K-3 literacy diagnostics to guide student interventions, provides a teaching endorsement for birth to third grade							
IL	Developing K-2 quality indicator, whole child perspective in plan, pre-K to third literacy initiative							
IN	Emphasis on growing, reporting, encouraging pre-K access and quality; chronic absenteeism in school quality ratings; training for high school students to become early childhood educators							
IA	Third grade reading law requires early interventions, universal screening, and monitoring; community partnerships as part of school improvement strategies							

State	Early Learning Highlights	Early Learning Opportunity Areas						
		Goals	Quality Indicator	School Support	Reports and Data	School Districts	Educator Devel.	Other
KS	Kindergarten readiness is a state goal, chronic absenteeism and suspension/expulsion rates used to identify schools in need of support							
KY	Focus on whole child approach, includes pre-K quality as part of "opportunity and access" indicator, expanded reporting on early learning							
LA	Aligning early childhood education program profiles with school profiles, curriculum ratings and supports, workforce development and training for early educators and principals							
ME	Focus on workforce professional development, training for leaders, curriculum and formative assessments in pre-K to third							
MD	Developing K-2 achievement measures, focus on kindergarten readiness and formative assessments, English Learner instruction in early years.							
MA	Interagency collaboration on birth to third grade, early literacy focus, reporting on pre-K on kindergarten readiness							
MI	Pre-K to third grade professional development system, encourages school/community early learning collaboration							
MN	Encourages districts to take a pre-K to third grade approach, joint professional development for teachers and leaders on early learning, kindergarten entry data							
MS	Goals around early learning, emphasis on educator professional development, early literacy data tools, pre-K program evaluation							
MO	State focus on early intervention and prevention, chronic absenteeism in school quality ratings							
MT	Attendance in school quality ratings, focus on kindergarten transitions and school/early childhood education collaboration							

State	Early Learning Highlights	Early Learning Opportunity Areas						
		Goals	Quality Indicator	School Support	Reports and Data	School Districts	Educator Level.	Other
NE	Included pre-K as part of educator equity plan, technical assistance includes early learning, sets a statewide goal around early learning awareness							
NV	Statewide strategy focused on pre-K quality and access and third grade reading, introducing formative assessments and diagnostics in pre-K to third							
NH	Kindergarten transitions toolkit and kindergarten readiness indicators.							
NJ	Launching K-3 literacy initiative, providing targeted professional development for pre-K to third grade							
NM	Focus on K-2 performance and data in multiple plan areas, including assessment, quality ratings, and public reporting, technical assistance for low performing schools around early learning							
NY	Kindergarten transitions focus, chronic absenteeism and exploring more indicators in future, early learning quality assurance protocol							
NC	Focus on birth to third grade systems alignment, kindergarten transitions, formative assessments, and aligned birth to third grade professional development							
ND	Early learning a top state priority area, focus of state research agenda							
OH	K-3 student literacy in accountability, focus on early learning as part of school improvement, encouraging LEA use of funds on early learning							
OK	Emphasis on pre-K to third grade in state strategy, especially in reading, targeted professional development and early educator preparation.							
OR	Early learning and system alignment part of strategic plan, focus on professional development, improvement plans must include early learning							

State	Early Learning Highlights	Early Learning Opportunity Areas						
		Goals	Quality Indicator	School Support	Reports and Data	School Districts	Educator Level.	Other
PA	Focus on early learning in elementary school improving, professional development for leaders, data connections between pre-K and K							
RI	Statewide academies for elementary reading and math instruction, redesigned parent-friendly report card.							
SC	State strategy emphasizes early learning, readiness assessments, pre-K to third grade literacy instruction professional development							
SD	Attendance in school quality ratings, exploring other indicators, district improvement plans must include early learning							
TN	Strong integration of early learning in plan, clear goals and strategies around early literacy, school support network on early learning, emphasis on targeted professional development							
TX	Statewide academies for elementary reading and math instruction, redesigned parent-friendly report card							
UT	Targeted professional development for early childhood educators							
VT	Universal pre-K availability							
VA	Chronic absenteeism, targeted pre-K to third grade professional development, early childhood transition plans							
WA	Statewide early learning strategy, technical assistance to support early learning, emphasis on role of districts, extensive early childhood education data, targeted PD, formative assessments							
WV	Suspensions starting from pre-K as a quality indicator, universal pre-K, targeted preK-3rd professional development on balanced approach to early literacy							
WI	Chronic absenteeism, professional development initiative							
WY	Long term goal around third grade reading, kindergarten readiness assessment							

Endnotes

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- v See for example, "Incorporating Early Learning Strategies in the School Improvement Grants Program", retrieved from <http://ceelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/TurnaroundCaseStudies01-22-15.pdf>
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