Project Summary

Early childhood is a critical period of learning and development that lays the foundation for future success in school and life. Research consistently shows high quality early learning is especially beneficial to children from low-income homes, English language learners, and others at risk for school failure. Children who attend high quality early learning programs are less likely to need special education services, to be retained, and are more likely to graduate from high school, go to college, and succeed in their careers.

To ensure gains made in high quality prekindergarten are sustained through the early elementary years, it is essential that educators in preK-3rd grades are equipped with the specialized knowledge and skills they need to be effective in early grades classrooms. Educators in early grades should have a firm understanding of the science of child development and the impact on the sequence of learning across multiple domains of learning/development. Early educators need to know what happens before and after the specific grade or age level they teach and be able to identify gaps in learning or development to remediate those gaps.

Evidence also suggests children benefit from a system of early childhood education that starts at preschool and continues through 3rd grade and includes aligned standards, curricula, instruction, and assessments. Young children often experience discontinuities in these elements, as they move through grade levels. As prekindergarten quality continues to improve and more children enroll in 3-year-old prekindergarten programs, the need for reevaluation of standards and curricula will arise in Kindergarten and continue through 3rd grade. Vertical alignment from preschool thru 3rd grade will give greater continuity of care, including a model of continuous improvement, and increasing rigor and standards, as each grade increases in competencies. School leadership and educators will need specialized training in effective practices in early grades learning, supporting quality, and continuous improvement, using assessments and student achievement data to differentiate and drive instruction.

Improving access to aligned preK-3rd instructional coaching for teachers and school leadership will support TEA’s strategic priority #2: Building a foundation of reading and math, as much of the achievement gap starts before a child enters the K-12 system.

LEA Financial Commitment (start-up and annual costs) *

The start-up and ongoing costs associated with preK-3rd aligned instructional coaching for school leaders and educators may include contracting with their ESC or other professional development providers to provide coursework in this topic area. The cost of instructional coaching varies significantly depending on the provider. School districts and charter schools may be able to develop the instructional coaching staff and resources in house.
Project Description

To build a strongly aligned, powerful early grades system, LEAs will need to develop leadership and educator skills within multiple target areas. To build early learning capacity, LEAs, in partnership with ESCs and other professional development providers, will need to:

- Facilitate the sharing of research-based, effective instructional coaching that brings preschool through grade three teachers, principals, staff, and program leaders together for joint professional learning and collaboration.
- Offer programs to increase the knowledge base of principals, K–3 teachers, or other school leaders on appropriate instruction in the early grades and on strategies to measure whether young children are progressing.
- Offer annual joint professional development related to the learning and development of children from birth through age 8.
- Establish and implement effective induction programs and ongoing supervision/evaluation of site administrators and teachers who work in preschool through third grade settings.
- Give compensation for added responsibilities and activities related to teacher leadership, such as peer instructional coaching, mentorship and induction, recruitment and retention, curriculum design, and advising on public policy.
- Offer training for educators on how to develop a comprehensive plan to support and engage families in the education of their children.

Goals and Student Achievement Objectives

A well-designed, high quality prekindergarten program will provide a higher number of students considered kindergarten ready and lead to greater student achievement in early grades math and literacy.

Expected Outcomes

The list below offers a sample of expected outcomes for successful implementation formatted as SMART goals (the percentage of ________ will increase from X% to Y% by Z (target date) or the number of ____ will increase from X to Y by Z).

- Increased percentage of children meeting Kindergarten Readiness assessment standard from X% to Y% by Z.
- Increase in student achievement in math and literacy in early grades from X% to Y% by Z.
- Increased number of teacher evaluated as effective or high-quality on annual performance evaluations from X to Y by Z.
- Increased number of staff meeting qualifications for prek-3rd classrooms from X to Y by Z.
- Greater leadership from principals on practices that create continuity of instruction and resources within and across early grades determined by an increased number of principals assessed as effective in annual staff evaluations from X to Y by Z.
- Increased percentage of students meeting grade level standard on 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade STAAR Reading and Math assessments from X% to Y% by Z.
Training and Support TEA Offers

The Office of Early Childhood Development at TEA is leading a professional learning community with the 20 Educational Service Centers. As part of this work, we will be focused on aligning professional development offered by each center and request development of a preK-3rd Educator and Leadership Series to include three drivers for change to improve the outcomes for children in early grades: leadership, competency (professional practice) and organizations (systems development). TEA will also provide recommended resources for ESCs and LEAs developing preK-3rd Series.

Required Activities or Components

Under Title II, Part A Sec. 2103 (b)(3)(G)(k) and (ii) Uses of Funds Activities, LEAs may use funds to increase the knowledge base of teachers, principals, or other school leaders on instruction in the early grades and on strategies to measure whether young children are progressing; and the ability of principals or other school leaders to support school and preschool program educators to meet the needs of students through age 8, including through joint professional learning and planning activities that address the transition to elementary school.

Program Duration, Timeline, or Significant Milestones

Implementation would include the following activities:

- Obtaining or providing principal leadership training including importance of early grades literacy and math, vertical alignment, data analysis, development of systems to support preK-3rd alignment, family engagement and resources and other topics relevant to early grades success.

- Obtaining or providing educator training on practices associated with aligned preK-3rd classroom instruction, assessment data analysis, information sharing across grades, horizontal planning, vertical planning, developmental needs of children 0-8 years old, differentiated instruction based on student data, continuous improvement practices, family engagement and other topics relevant to early grades success.

Staffing Requirements for LEAs

Districts looking to implement a preK-3rd aligned system will need to identify a school lead on system development. If instructional coaching for early childhood educators is offered by ESCs or other external providers, a school district may need to appoint someone within the district to coordinate instructional coaching initiatives for principals and educators.

Resources**

Preschool – Third Grade

- The Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating Pre-K–3rd Grade Approaches offers a vision for approaches designed to improve the quality and coherence of children’s learning opportunities, from preschool through third grade. Ultimately, comprehensive P–3 approaches hold the potential to improve child outcomes and prevent or close achievement gaps. This framework is intended to be referenced and used over an extended period for reflection, self-evaluation, and improvement of P–3 efforts. It is designed primarily for use by schools, school districts, early learning programs, and other community partners.

- Developed by a panel of leading practitioners, Leading Pre-K:3–Learning Communities: Competencies for Effective Principal Practice, from the National Association of Elementary School Principals, defines new competencies, and outlines a practical approach to high-quality early childhood education that is critical to laying a strong foundation for
learning for young children from age three to third grade.

- **Principal's Corner: Perspectives on Teaching and Learning in Pre-K–3rd Grade**, from New America, is based on focus groups of elementary school principals conducted in five U.S. cities. The six briefs take a closer look at principals’ perceptions of what should take place in pre-K and early grade classrooms, while offering recommendations for States and school districts regarding building principals’ expertise in this area.

**Family Engagement**

- The [ED-HHS Policy Statement on Family Engagement: From the Early Years to the Early Grades](#) offers guidance and recommendations to early childhood systems and programs on family engagement practices from the early years to the early grades. Family engagement refers to the systematic inclusion of families in activities and programs that promote children’s development, learning, and wellness, including in the planning, development, and evaluation of such activities, programs, and systems.

- [Parenting Matters: Supporting Parents of Children Ages 0–8](#) from the National Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine examines the State of the science with respect to parenting knowledge, attitudes, and practices that support positive parent-child interactions and healthy development of children ages 0–8; strategies for supporting parents and helping them engage in parenting practices associated with healthy child development; barriers and facilitators to strengthening parenting capacity and parents’ participation in effective programs and services; and gaps in research on parenting. The report is intended to serve as a roadmap for the future of parenting and family support policies, practices, and research in the United States.

- [Two Generation Approaches](#) is a publication, prepared for the Department by Jobs for the Future, that considers the needs of both vulnerable children and parents, together, in the design and delivery of services and programs to support improved economic, education, health, safety, and other outcomes that address the issues of intergenerational poverty.

**Language/Literacy**

- The [Early Learning Language and Literacy Series](#) of professional development modules on early literacy learning from birth to kindergarten is designed to support the work of early education initiatives across the 50 States and the territories to support the language and literacy development of young children.

- [Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade](#) Practice Guide gives four recommendations for teaching foundational reading skills to students in kindergarten through third grade. Each recommendation includes implementation steps and solutions for common obstacles.

[Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children](#). This National Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine study offers a summary report that examines research findings to provide an integrated picture of how reading develops and the importance of high quality preschool and kindergarten environments and their contribution to providing a critical foundation to facilitate children’s acquisition of essential reading skills. ED and HHS created tip sheets for families, caregivers, and early learning educators. The “Talk, Read, and Sing Together Every Day” resources can help enrich a child’s early language experiences by providing research-based tips for talking, reading, and singing with young children every day beginning from birth.
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

- The Let's Talk, Read, and Sing about STEM! resources offer fun, concrete resources and recommendations for families, caregivers, and infant, toddler, and preschool educators on easy ways to incorporate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) concepts and vocabulary into everyday routines.

- The book, Mathematics Learning in Early Childhood: Paths Toward Excellence and Equity, gives information about the critical areas that should be the focus of young children's early mathematics education, explores the extent to which they are now being incorporated in early childhood settings, and identifies the changes needed to improve the quality of mathematics experiences for young children. This practice guide, Teaching Math to Young Children, from the Institute of Education Sciences offers educators specific, evidence-based recommendations that address the challenge of teaching early math to children ages 3 to 6.

Neuroscience

- From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development, from the National Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, presents the evidence about "brain wiring" and how kids learn to speak, think, and regulate their behavior. It examines the effect of the climate—family, childcare, and community—in which the child grows. From Neurons to Neighborhoods: An Update: Workshop Summary is based on the original study released in October 2000.

Workforce

- Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation. This report from National Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine offers recommendations to build a workforce that is unified by the foundation of the science of child development and early learning and the shared knowledge and competencies that are needed to provide consistent, high-quality support for the development and early learning of children from birth through age 8.

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