

EARLY SCHOOL SUCCESS SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENTS

BACKGROUND RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOR THE EARLY SCHOOL SUCCESS INITIATIVE

INTRODUCTION

The following documents were written during the research and development period leading to the design of the Early School Success initiative. They are intended to provide detailed context on the process we used to design our program features, content, and scope.

Many of our recommendations for the initiative were developed over time as we met with various stakeholders and continuously incorporated feedback into our work. Our Request For Proposals reflects a culmination of our thinking as a result of the research and development period.

The following documents include:

- **Landscape Analysis:** This report served as the impetus to learn more about Oregon's context and to seek out models for P-3 alignment across the country.
- **Technical Work Group Attendee List:** This is a list of the participants in our first Technical Work Group.
- **Technical Work Group Summary:** This is a summary of the content shared and learnings from the Technical Work Group, which focused on bringing high level focus and direction to our recommendations.
- **Design Team Attendee List:** This is a list of the participants from our Design Team. The Design Team followed the Technical Work Group.
- **Design Team Summary:** A summary of learnings from the Design Team that helped shape our recommendations. We spent a full day together diving deeper into the details of making recommendations for the initiative.
- **The Webinar Slide Deck:** After the Design Team, we developed recommendations and shared them out with our Technical Work Group and Design Team participants.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

of Professional Development Supports for P-3 Alignment in Oregon

Produced by Kim Thomas, consultant
and the Children's Institute
with support from the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation

April 2016

Introduction

The public education system in Oregon is undergoing significant changes. From the governor's office to the Department of Education, there are many new education leaders. There are also systemic changes taking place, including the initiation of a system of Early Learning Hubs across the state. Included in these changes has been a movement towards connecting the early years and the early grades; this is commonly referred to as P-3 alignment. The vision behind P-3 alignment is to improve the quality and coherence of children's learning opportunities, beginning well before children enter school and extending through third grade. Launched in 2010 by the Children's Institute along with several partners, Early Works was one of the first P-3 initiatives in the state.

[Early Works](#) began as a demonstration site to provide a blueprint for what an integrated birth through third grade system could look like. Within a very short timeframe the initiative served as a catalyst for both public and private investments to implement similar efforts statewide. At the state level, the Children's Institute developed and advocated for the Kindergarten Partnership & Innovation Fund (KPIF). The KPIF created the first opportunity in Oregon's history to intentionally invest in innovative and promising models for birth-to-third-grade alignment in sixteen school-communities across the state. The Early Works model also provided a template for the Oregon Community Foundation's prenatal to 3 transformation grants.

These P-3 initiatives have amplified the need for technical assistance from districts and communities. Since launching Early Works, the Children's Institute and its partners have increasingly received requests from early learning and K-12 education leaders statewide for technical assistance and support for P-3 related work. These requests inspired the Children's Institute to conduct a landscape analysis to better understand the technical assistance needs in the state and how Oregon's early learning and public education systems could ensure quality implementation to support strong connections between K-12 and early learning.

The Children's Institute contracted with an external consultant to conduct a total of 40 interviews (49 individuals) with education leaders and stakeholders across the state. The interviewees were early adopters working to align early learning and the early grades. Interviewees included: early learning providers, K-12 educators and administrators, state agency staff from

the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and ODE's Early Learning Division (ELD), community-based organizations, researchers, and foundation representatives. Selected interviewees had some familiarity with and exposure to beginning efforts at P-3 alignment. (Please see Appendix A for a list of questions asked and Appendix B for a list of individuals interviewed.)

The overarching goal of this interview project was to learn more about the professional supports needed to ensure public and private investments in early learning lead to improved child outcomes through 3rd grade and that those outcomes can be sustained. Following is a summary of the key learnings from those interviews.

(Note: K-12 is used to refer to the public education system in Oregon. Interviews primarily focused on work being done within or in partnership with public elementary schools.)

Overarching System Alignment Needs

Following are the recurring needs that emerged from these interviews around P-3 alignment. These needs were highlighted by a majority of interviewees across systems (e.g., early learning, K-12, community-based partners, researchers):

- Principal leadership is the linchpin in creating a culture that supports the connection between early learning and K-12 instruction. It is also critical in creating a culture that engages families.
- K-12 administrators and teachers need core grounding and training in early learning concepts and developmentally appropriate instructional strategies.
- The K-12 and early learning systems have different philosophies, ideas of what quality means, how or whether to engage families, and who they respect to provide training and professional development. Bringing these professional communities together requires a bridge effort that keeps the focus on outcomes for children.
- The best professional development involves presentation of concepts and then coaching, mentoring, and reflection to embed concepts in practical day-to-day instruction. Some of the most valuable time should be spent in "vertical professional development" with early learning and K-1 teachers that involves significant time for conversation and planning to align the two systems ("co-creation time").

- To offer quality vertical professional development, each system needs to address its structural barriers that prevent alignment (e.g., union/contract restrictions, need for substitutes to cover early learning teacher time, different times of day when staff members are available for professional development, etc.).
- Programs serving children and families of color, immigrant communities, and rural communities need tailored support with training, partnerships, and resources as well as flexibility in strategies used to reach quality outcomes.
- Most interviewees agreed that ODE/ELD and the Early Learning Hubs could conceptually lead the provision of quality supports and professional development for early learning/K-12 alignment at a later date, but they are far from building their own systems and capacity to support such work. Bridge efforts/partnerships are necessary in the meantime.
- There isn't a common structure in place that allows for shared professional development.
- Several interviewees reported that Head Start does the best job at family engagement and removing barriers to truly support families; also developing parents as leaders, governance contributors, etc. Other interviewees also reported that Relief Nurseries can be good partners, particularly around family engagement. Ultimately, early learning interviewees reported that schools should do family engagement through partnerships.
- However, Head Start's more than 1,600 standards are too complicated. Some interest in looking more at National Association for the Education of Young Children Standards alignment vs. Head Start.
- Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, often known as CCR&Rs, can be a great training resource – connecting Pre-K partners/schools to quality trainers in early learning and linking child care networks to Early Learning Hubs and P-3 networks.
- Alignment between early childhood system regulations and schools will be needed for schools to effectively provide preschool services.
- Feels like an unequal playing field between early learning and K-12. K-12 system values credentials. With early learning community, it is more about on-the-ground experience, which is not as respected by the K-12 system. It is not a level playing field, with inequality in pay and training.
- Many early learning providers are skeptical of K-12 professional development resources.

Specific Interview Insights and Observations

From the early learning perspective:

Interviews with early learning professionals such as Head Start directors and early learning experts revealed that many in the early learning sector fear becoming absorbed by K-12 systems without those systems developing teaching strategies that are developmentally appropriate and effective for young children and families. Yet, interviewees expressed a strong desire to work with and align with the K-12 system to achieve better outcomes for children. The following themes emerged in the interviews:

- A number of interviewees said, “Don’t just push kindergarten down.” Very different philosophies between early learning world and K-12 world. How they each define quality is very different. (For instance, importance of play came up frequently with early learning providers; it was rarely mentioned by K-12 leaders.)
- Need more collaborative style of leadership in P-3 work. There is a need for leadership training for collaboration.
- The early learning world needs to better understand the K-12 system to work with the early grades more effectively.

From the K-12 perspective:

Interviews with principals, superintendents, and district-employed early learning specialists revealed that while schools are becoming increasingly eager to take on preschool, they do not yet have the professional training and experience to work with very young children or understand the broader landscape of prenatal through grade 3 work. Partnerships with early learning providers have been challenging, often leading schools to try to take on this work themselves. In addition, tying success to data is important for K-12 leaders (not mentioned as much by early learning interviewees). The following are key themes that arose during interviews with K-12 leaders:

- The early learning community needs to allow some room to understand how its work relates to K-12 benchmarks and standards (“can’t just reject Common Core”). Providers need to better articulate their role in a child’s educational pathway, what one researcher

calls the “upward progression of learning.”

- Several superintendents suggested early learning leaders need to develop a culture to embrace and interpret data. Tying success to data is critical. Early learning leaders need to collect relevant data around P-3 needs (e.g., from community needs assessments) and then adapt the analysis of that data to be “actionable” to school leaders and staff.
- Some type of capacity needs to be added for schools to do parent engagement well – a dedicated position to coordinate and assist principal and teachers to create relationships and new strategies for engagement. Partnerships can also be effective to do this work but the school needs to embrace the partner.
- Concept of co-designing is critical for teacher buy-in. Administrators and teachers need to “muck about and build together.”
- Several superintendents and principals agreed that Oregon’s Response To Instruction and Intervention, or RTIi, program could be a good model for cohort-style professional development in P-3 alignment: it provides coaching and mentoring, supported by ODE but implemented on the ground by districts/schools. RTIi program is a model of scaling up with a high level of fidelity. One superintendent cautioned, however, that where the RTIi model falls down is that it will take years to get it implemented across all school districts (took one district three years to get accepted into RTIi cohort).
- Several interviewees expressed “demonstration project fatigue” and felt we need a way to scale up that meets reality of resource availability. Also, how do you truly tie early learning partners into a K-12 model?
- Several interviewees said any type of professional development model needs to build in a strong English as a Second Language component.
- Institute for Youth Success (formerly Oregon Mentors) approach suggested; they are nimble, responsive, offer regional workshops, and utilize a strong coaching model.
- One K-12 education technical assistance provider highlighted ODE’s rollout of common core training to districts: they used professional learning teams, asked districts to put together a consistent team and helped them spell out who should be on teams. ODE funded both initial training and then training to implement what they learned. Level of professional development was much higher than anything they’ve done in the past.
- Adding a family resource center in schools has been a productive strategy for family engagement. Need

funding for capacity to staff it and connect its work to teachers and administrators. Schools need added resources for quality family engagement. Can’t just add it into what they are doing – no time or bandwidth.

- Principals are really the ones who need to change the culture of their schools and lead P-3 alignment work. Principals need training to do this work.
- As schools move to full-day kindergarten, they are seeing more challenging behavior issues. Opportunity to show how early learning staff/providers can be a resource for how to better teach, engage, and support younger children.
- Still tension around the perception that early learning got more resources in the 2015 state legislative session at expense of K-12 system. More work to do to get K-12 to understand that early learning investments are investments in K-12 outcomes.
- Also perception among interviewees outside the Portland metro area that rural schools and communities are ignored by efforts that originate in and are spearheaded by metro area schools and organizations as well as by ODE/ELD. Need to look at different models that can best serve and be sustainable in very rural communities with limited access to resources.
- One state administrator expressed the need for balance between pursuing legislatively mandated initiatives (which are often seen as unfunded mandates, particularly by K-12 schools) and administrative changes, where you can build buy-in through more inclusive processes that bring leaders and practitioners along, allowing them to help shape the change desired.

Where early learning and K-12 are in agreement:

Despite each system having very different training, philosophies, and practice, there was agreement that P-3 alignment should happen and happen well so we achieve the best outcomes for children.

- Need to train K-12 teachers and administrators about the importance and components of early learning – brain development, developmentally appropriate learning, social emotional development.
- Importance of culturally responsive teaching and curricula. There should be ongoing professional development for current teachers/administrators and this should be a central component of teacher preparation programs and principal certification programs for both K-12 and early learning.
- Leadership is critical but need to get beyond the

“heroic leader” model (one district superintendent doing work well). Need to embed importance of early learning and alignment in teacher/principal training programs for sustainability.

- Need more time for conversation and planning through shared professional development between Pre-K and K-3 staff and other early learning partners; vertical professional learning teams are most effective, but need to figure out the logistical barriers that currently exist. Localize professional development as much as possible with respected, local mentors and coaches.
- A lot of concern that the Early Learning Division will not get equal weight/recognition with ODE, so real alignment won't occur at the top. Only two staff really focusing on this work (one position at ODE and one at ELD) – way under capacity to make alignment work.
- ODE seems interested in leveraging public-private partnerships going forward. Early Learning Division team is interested in public-private partnerships as well. How exactly these partnerships should look remains unclear.
- Generally, the Kindergarten Partnership & Innovation Fund grants have been viewed very positively. Really helping with deeper family engagement. But schools believe they need a continued source of funding, like such grants, to make it work long term.
- Schools often don't know who is doing early learning/Pre-K in their community. Schools need to know this before they launch a new Pre-K program in their system. There needs to be a system in place to help make the connections between schools and providers.
- Health systems/Coordinated Care Organizations seen as great partners in P-3 work (best way of getting to kids and families really early, particularly in rural/remote areas).
- The majority of interviewees felt that the role of Early Learning Hubs is confusing and unclear; hubs have potential to be key conveners for professional development but are far from achieving that goal. Some hubs are doing well, have strong leadership, and have strong early childhood and school involvement Others are struggling.

Conclusion

This landscape analysis focused on early adopters in the early learning and K-12 systems who have begun the journey toward implementing P-3 alignment initiatives or systems. Through all 40 interviews, it was clear that these professionals cared passionately about their practice, understood the need for alignment between early learning providers and K-12 systems, and despite frustrations with the “other system,” wanted to find viable ways to bridge those differences. They all wanted to create a system that engages parents and families from the beginning of a child's life and continues that engagement well into elementary school, with all actors in the system focused on what's best for children.

It is important to note that there were some key constituencies not interviewed in this project, including parents, classroom teachers, union representatives, and higher education teacher training faculty. Soliciting and understanding their perspectives as an aligned system moves forward will be critical.

There was a clear consensus that a stronger partnership between state agencies, K-12 schools, early learning providers, academics, and advocates is needed – one that is intentional, patient, and child/family focused and willing to bridge philosophical differences to jointly reduce system barriers. The Children's Institute as well as the state's major foundations could play a role in helping set the table for understanding, compromise, and truly effective P-3 alignment and implementation.

List of Interviewees

Harriet Adair, Assistant Superintendent and Early Childhood Director, Portland Public Schools
Christina Alquisira, Early Learning Director, Gladstone School District
Nancy Anderson, Assistant Director of Student Services, David Douglas School District
Susan Brady, Director, Child Development and Family Support, Mt. Hood Community College
Abby Bush, Associate Program Officer, Early Childhood, The Oregon Community Foundation
Colin Cameron, Deputy Executive Director, Confederation of Oregon School Administrators
Kendra Coates, P-3 Coordinator, High Desert Education Service District
Bridget Cooke, Executive Director, Adelante Mujeres (Forest Grove)
Pam Greenough Corrie, Associate Director, Mt. Hood Community College Head Start
Christy Cox, Program Officer for Children, Youth and Families, The Ford Family Foundation
Yvonne Curtis, Superintendent, Forest Grove School District
Suzanne Dalton, Coordinator of Professional Learning, Confederation of Oregon School Administrators
Donalda Dodson, Executive Director, Oregon Child Development Coalition
Sadie Feibel, Director of Education Programs, Latino Network (Juntos Aprendemos)
Colt Gill, Superintendent, Bethel School District
Beth Green, Director of Early Childhood and Family Support Research, Center for Improvement of Child and Family Services, Portland State University
Lillian Green, Equity Director, Early Learning Division
Don Grotting, Superintendent, David Douglas School District
Ericka Guynes, Principal, Earl Boyles Elementary (David Douglas School District)
Merrily Haas, Executive Director, Oregon Association for the Education of Young Children
Lisa Harnisch, Executive Director, Marion County Early Learning Hub
Jeneen Hartley-Sago, Program Officer for Children, Youth and Families, The Ford Family Foundation
Nancy Hauth, Program Manager (pre-kindergarten, kindergarten supports, and child care), Portland Public Schools
****Ron Herndon**, Director, Albina Head Start (Portland)
Sue Hildick, President, Chalkboard Project
Megan Irwin, Acting Director, Early Learning Division
Sonia Kool, Director of Instructional Services, Woodburn School District
Kali Ladd, Executive Director, KairosPDX (Portland)
Erin Lolich, Curriculum and Instruction Practice Expert, Education Northwest
David Mandell, Early Learning Policy and Partnerships Director, Early Learning Division
Mary Louise McClintock, Director of Education Programs, The Oregon Community Foundation
Julia Meier, Director, Coalition for Communities of Color
Matt Morton, Executive Director, Native American Youth and Family Center
Sharon Nelson, Early Learning Principal, Coquille School District
Judy Newman, Early Childhood CARES Co-Director (Lane County)
Salam Noor, Deputy Superintendent, Oregon Department of Education
Jon Peterson, Superintendent, Pendleton School District
Maryalice Russell, Superintendent, McMinnville School District
Rob Saxton, Superintendent, Northwest Regional Education Service District
Kelly Soter, Principal, Jackson Elementary School (Medford School District)
Bob Stewart, Superintendent, Gladstone School District
****Pat Sublette**, Special Education Director, Douglas Education Service District

List of Interviewees, continued

Tim Sweeney, Superintendent, Coquille School District

Karen Twain, Assistant Superintendent, Tigard/Tualatin School District

Jean Wagner, Director, Mt. Hood Community College Head Start

Brett Walker, Early Learning Initiatives Coordinator, Early Learning Division

Christine Waters, Director, Child Care Resource and Referral of Multnomah County

Maria Weer, Executive Director, Building Healthy Families (Enterprise)

Stephanie Whetzel, Student Services Coordinator for Early Childhood Programs, Salem-Keizer Public Schools

Kara Williams, P-3 Coordinator, Oregon Department of Education

Jan Zarate, Superintendent, Yoncalla School District

All interviews were conducted in the fall of 2015. Titles and affiliations listed reflect each person's role at the time of the interview.

**Invited to interview

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TECHNICAL WORK GROUP SUMMARY:

PREPARED FOR THE JAMES F AND MARION L MILLER FOUNDATION

September 27, 2017

INTRODUCTION

The extensive work involved in the Discovery Phase of the project (research, literature review, and synthesis of site visit findings to develop a coaching and professional development model to better align teaching practices from preschool to third grade) continued at a rapid pace over the summer. The findings to date were summarized and presented at the first Technical Work Group (TWG) convening on August 14th, 2017.

This project update includes a summary of the TWG meeting and a brief description of where the work is headed this fall. We have also included an abridged version of the Technical Workgroup Power Point presentation for your review.

THE TECHNICAL WORK GROUP

On August 14, Children's Institute (CI) convened the first of two Early School Success TWG meetings. The primary goals of the meeting were to:

- Get input and guidance from a broad set of key stakeholders on the necessary skills and knowledge for pre-kindergarten through fifth grade teachers, principals, district administrators, and school-community partners to develop effective and aligned PreK – 5th grade instruction.
- Get feedback on what type of delivery methods for professional learning and supports we should consider.
- Ensure our design is feasible for implementation and adds value in diverse urban and rural school district settings in Oregon.
- Share lessons learned from our research and site visits.
- Garner support and buy-in for the project.

TWG Participants

In early July, 44 key statewide stakeholders were invited to participate in the TWG, representing early learning, K-12, higher education, research, and philanthropy. Of those invited, 29 attended the meeting, including four superintendents. The superintendents were from rural and urban districts, and one district serving predominately English Language Learners. Representatives from the Oregon Department of Education, Education Service Districts, Early Learning Hubs, and other education non-profit organizations also attended. Additionally, we appreciated both Martha Richards and Michelle Reynolds' participation at the TWG.

The wide variety of education professionals participating in the TWG prompted one participant to note, "Look at the brain trust in this room!" We all concurred that the turnout and level of engagement throughout the meeting was impressive.

Meeting Facilitation

Chris Tebben, Principal at Sapient Solutions, LLC, an independent consulting firm specializing in education partner development, facilitated the work group. She focused the attendees on a series of small group exercises to elicit discussion and feedback. CI project staff worked closely with Chris and Ruby Takanishi, senior advisor for the project, to develop a detailed agenda and meeting materials to address the ambitious meeting goals.



Chris Tebben prepares the TWG for a small group discussion.

Meeting Content

In opening remarks, Swati grounded the participants in the project goals and purpose for the TWG. She shared the mission of CI's work and how this project is nested within the organization's broader vision of helping more children reach third grade benchmarks, so they can be better prepared to graduate high school and experience long-term success in school and life.

Chris Tebben outlined the meeting agenda, project timeline, and the focus of the meeting conversation. Marina Merrill (Project Manager) then shared key findings from the project's original Landscape Analysis to prime the participants for small group discussions to elicit feedback on the needed skills and supports for principals, district administrators, teachers, and partners for PreK-Elementary instruction alignment. Small group

discussions were facilitated by CI staff and extracted a wide range of challenges, ideas, recommendations, and discussion.



Rafael Otto, a CI staff member, facilitates a small group discussion.

After the first two small group exercises, Marina Merrill and Soobin Oh (CI lead project staff) shared a summary of core strategies gleaned from the literature review, site visits, and individual interviews of Oregon key stakeholders. The presentation underscored the critical importance of school districts developing a cohesive and aligned instructional framework that unifies standards, assessment, curriculum, teaching practices, and professional learning within and across all grade levels, beginning with preschool. Case studies demonstrating those key findings from Boston Public Schools, San Francisco Unified School District, and SEAL Sobrato in California Schools were also presented. Marina Merrill and Soobin Oh then described the essential components of effective professional learning systems (Please see attached Power Point Slide presentation). To close, participants wrote down their reflections on the lessons learned and worked with CI facilitators to discuss key takeaways in small groups.



TWG Participants listen in on a presentation by Marina Merrill and Soobin Oh

TWG Insights

The TWG's discussions confirmed and validated much of our research and learnings from site visits and interviews, but added more detailed texture to the specific challenges facing Oregon. The following insights are drawn from frequently mentioned comments from the TWG:

Instructional Practices & Policies Guided by an Understanding of Young Children's Development

There was a vigorous call for all educators and allied school professionals at all levels to have a stronger understanding of early child development, and, most importantly, to rethink how education is being delivered to be more reflective of young children's development from ages 4 to 10. This call was directed at all members of the educational system: PreK-5th teachers, principals, district administrators, partner agencies, professional development providers, families, and allied staff (i.e. bus drivers, social workers, custodians, school psychologists, school nurses, after school program staff, etc.) were identified as critical partners. TWG participants shared that what we know about the child development continuum should be guiding classroom environment design, instructional strategies, instruction progressions from pre-K to 5th, and assessments.

TWG participants expressed a concern that a fundamental and nuanced understanding of young children's development is not at the forefront of educational policies and organizational structures. Change is needed in the current educational system to optimally design learning environments to better meet the academic and social-emotional needs of young children.

Integration of Pre-K Requires District and Principal Leadership

Another powerful insight from the TWG was a strong desire to include Pre-K as part of the elementary grades continuum of instruction. The comments were directed broadly to "de-silo" Pre-K and bring it into the fold of the K-12 educational continuum. Multiple comments beckoned district administrators and principals to be the leaders for setting a table that includes Pre-K. Many barriers were mentioned that would need to be addressed to assure a more inclusive and integrated model. Barriers cited included the need to create and fund time for regular collaboration and planning within and across grade levels, the lack of qualified and available substitute teachers, few opportunities for teachers from Pre-K to 5th grade to engage in meaningful dialogue, and for pre-k and elementary teachers to see each other as resourceful colleagues.

Mindfulness of Leveraging Existing Resources and Ongoing Initiatives

The TWG cautioned us not to "recreate the wheel." Multiple improvement initiatives and efforts were well underway; some existing professional development resources have been untapped; and there is a problem with the "layering" of initiatives on top of others, resulting in initiative fatigue and "projectitis." Further, many TWG participants mentioned that localizing the design and implementation to better connect preschool and elementary school would yield a more responsive model. Participants discussed the recent momentum in Oregon around Trauma Informed Care initiatives and the critical need to embed those approaches in the design. Additionally, participants wanted to ensure that this initiative builds on the PreK-3rd work already underway through the state-funded Kindergarten Partnership Innovation Fund (KPIF), Oregon Community

Foundation (OCF) grants, and Early Works. These comments were directly linked to suggestions to include family engagement, an equity lens, and community driven solutions.



TWG Participants leave feedback and give guidance to our Design Team

NEXT STEPS

In the coming months CI staff will complete the Discovery Phase and transition into generating new professional development approaches for consideration in Oregon.

Listening to Teacher's Voices: Focus Groups

CI is partnering with RMC Research to conduct focus groups in six Oregon school districts that currently offer preschool. The goal is to better understand the teachers' experiences with early learning and alignment, and their current experiences with professional development. In October 2017, two focus groups per district will be conducted:

- David Douglas School District
- Forest Grove School District

- North Douglas County Region
- North Clackamas School District
- Salem-Keizer Public Schools
- Portland Public Schools

Synthesizing Focus Group Findings and TWG Findings

RMC Research will provide rapid feedback and results from the focus groups to Children's Institute. CI staff will also conduct principal interviews to provide better context for the lessons learned in the focus groups and to understand the needs of principals to better support alignment. Findings from the focus groups and principal interviews will be summarized and synthesized with the TWG insights, which will help inform and refine the professional development approaches for the design.

The Design Team

During the process of planning for the TWG, Ruby Takanishi, the project's Senior Advisor, raised concerns about the short time frame allotted for the TWG to grapple with large issues concerning the design and project implementation. We all agreed that it was a very ambitious agenda and that we needed to form an additional sub-group of the TWG to allow for deeper planning time. We introduced the concept of the design team at the first TWG meeting. Over half of the participants volunteered to join the team and many volunteered other respected colleagues.

The Design Team's purpose is to provide critical feedback on the project's design and to help craft the model's core features. We are leaning on their expertise and contextual knowledge of school systems to help ensure that the final recommendations are feasible, meaningful, and will have positive outcomes for students. The voices of teachers will be thoroughly embedded throughout the process to ensure our ultimate end-users' needs are reflected in our recommendations. We are targeting the Design Team to meet in early January to allow time for the completion of teacher focus groups and principal interviews. It is critical that the design team consider the findings from these additional sources of data as we refine and craft the recommendations.

Convening the Second TWG

The purpose of the second TWG is to present a complete picture of our design with the intent to receive a last round of feedback to refine our final recommendations. The group is composed of people who are thoroughly invested in creating better connections between early education and elementary education, and garnering their support for the recommendations are also imminently valuable.

Thank You

The ongoing dialogue and partnership with Martha Richards and Michelle Reynolds has been invaluable. We thank you for your continued support on this project to better align preschool with elementary education to improve educational outcomes for young children.

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Earl Boyles Elementary School

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Early Works Site Liaison, Yoncalla
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Clackamas Community College

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Northwest Regional ESD

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Beaverton School District

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Museum Center for Learning,
Opal School

Sonia Kool
Director of Title Programs
Woodburn School District

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EARLY SCHOOL SUCCESS DESIGN TEAM SUMMARY

January 22, 2018

INTRODUCTION

In January 2017, Children's Institute (CI) embarked on a research and design process to better understand the professional learning needs of educators working to improve alignment between preschool and elementary school. As part of this design phase, CI formed a technical work group comprised of a diverse set of early learning and K–12 education leaders. The purpose of the work group was to help inform development of the professional learning pilot initiative, Early School Success (project name).

The first meeting of the Early School Success Technical Work Group was in August 2017. The technical work group helped generate new ideas as well as additional questions. Knowing that this complex topic would require additional time to gather meaningful input, CI invited all members of the technical work group to join the design team, a sub work group. This group dedicated a full day to dive deeper into helping answer questions to further guide the development of a key set of recommendations to ensure that CI is establishing the conditions for a successful project launch and implementation.

The design team convened on December 14, 2017. Members included a subset of participants from the first technical work group and additional participants with key expertise regarding preschool and elementary school instruction. This meeting was an opportunity to go deeper into shared discussions around strategies to better align preschool and elementary education in Oregon. The energy and passion in the room was tangible, and CI greatly appreciated the dedication of the participants who shared their expertise and insight. This report provides a summary of the design team meeting, the key findings that will inform the work of aligning preschool and elementary education, and a preview of the final steps of the design year.

The goals of the meeting were

- to share and gather insight on new developments gathered during the research and design year focused on alignment between preschool and elementary education
- to identify essential members of a core Early School Success district leadership team
- to identify indicators of district readiness that will ensure the success of program implementation



design team participants share their expertise with small group facilitators.

SUMMARY

Meeting Facilitation

Chris Tebben, principal at Sapient Solutions, LLC, was the lead facilitator for our design team. CI staff worked closely with Chris and Ruby Takanishi, our senior advisor, to craft the agenda for the design team (see Appendix A). Given that CI was seeking to gather rich and nuanced feedback from our 24 design team participants (see Appendix B), CI arranged five small group facilitators and five note-takers to facilitate small group discussions over the course of the day.

Meeting Content

The morning began with a presentation by Margaret Beam, director of RMC Research, and Lauren Maxim, senior research associate of RMC Research. Margaret and Lauren shared the key themes and findings from teacher focus groups that took place in October 2017 in six different school districts or regions in Oregon: David Douglas School District, Forest Grove School District, Portland Public Schools, Salem-Keizer School District, North Clackamas School District, and the North Douglas County Region.

The findings (see Appendix C) from these focus groups revealed the challenges that teachers face in creating alignment from preschool through fifth grade. While teachers see the benefits of aligned instruction and whole-child approaches to teaching and learning, teachers feel that district priorities and constraints limit the teachers' ability to shift their practices. Professional development structures also do not give enough time for teachers to plan the implementation of professional development content, and instead new curricula and initiatives fill their professional development time. Further, teachers feel that cross-grade preK–3 professional development is useful, but opportunities to collaborate and plan across grades have been either limited or nonexistent.



Margaret Beam, RMC presents findings from teacher focus groups to design team participants.

The findings presented by RMC laid the groundwork for a presentation by CI staff: Marina Merrill, senior research & policy advisor, and Soobin Oh, early childhood education advisor. Based on a year of researching and interviewing, Marina and Soobin presented their assessment on the key path toward alignment: instructional strategies grounded in an articulated guiding philosophy that are fully supported by standards, curriculum, assessments, and professional supports. This is critical for success because standards, curriculum, assessments, and professional supports have often been treated as separate entities that many times do not map to, and can even inhibit, the instructional choices that teachers make. Meanwhile, nationally pioneering districts in preK–3 demonstrated that a laser focus on supporting instructional strategies leads to improvement that educators desperately want and, most importantly, results in better outcomes for the school district’s youngest learners.



Soobin Oh and Marina Merrill present findings from the design phase.

Marina and Soobin from the Children’s Institute concluded the presentation by describing how to enact the key findings. They described CI’s latest thinking on the Early School Success pilot program designed with the purpose of establishing the conditions to align instructional strategies. Key features include:

- a. Facilitated 3–5 year process
- b. 2–4 Pilot Districts
- c. Focus on improving and aligning **teaching and learning**

- d. Alignment and improvement through reorganizing **professional learning structures**
- e. Built-in cycles of **evaluation, research, and continuous improvement.**
- f. Participation in the Early School Success **cross-district professional learning community.**
- g. Parallel **state-level P–5 advisory team** created to inform and coordinate a state level preK–5 strategy.

In addition to aligning PreK–5 instructional strategies within a district through the support of direct consultation, there will also be opportunities for other districts. CI is pursuing a strategy to engage a broader community of interested districts to learn from the initial pilot sites through the cross-district professional learning community (PLC). The PLC would expand membership to include other districts that could benefit from learning from the pilot sites and from national experts.

To create systemic and normative change to help young learners succeed, CI also recognizes state-level policy changes must be enacted. Therefore, CI is also proposing that a state-level preK–5 advisory team be established to coordinate a policy strategy that is directly informed by lessons learned from the pilot sites and the PLC.

After presenting these concepts and strategies, the design team participants offered input. In order to elicit targeted and strategic feedback, CI prepared three small group activities that centered on three overarching questions.

1. Given our understanding of what preschool through elementary alignment aims to do, which roles are essential to include in the project leadership team for the Year 1 planning process?
2. How will we address the challenging tensions presented by RMC research in the teacher focus groups?
3. What would indicate a district's readiness to take on this pilot program, and what might indicate that a district should avoid taking on this pilot program?

These three overarching questions were carefully engineered into small group activities with five designated tables and a facilitator and note-taker present at each table. Two of the five small groups focused on addressing these questions through the lens of special populations: rural communities and dual-language learners.

KEY FINDINGS REGARDING THE CORE TEAM

The first small group activity centered on the question of who or what role would be essential to a district Early School Success leadership team. The activity was designed to elicit feedback on which roles within and outside a district would lead to aligning and supporting instruction, and how these core members could be most effectively engaged. CI asked the design team members who they felt would be “core” and required roles for an alignment team, and who they felt would be “essential” for buy-in. The following is a summary of important findings from this discussion.

1. The five small groups named more than 30 total roles that were important to the success of the project. There were some inconsistencies on which members would be core and essential. There were, however, some consistent agreements on “core” members.
 - a. Principals
 - b. Preschool teacher representatives
 - c. Elementary teacher representatives

- d. District curriculum coordinators
- e. District professional development coordinators
- f. P–3 or early childhood coordinator
- g. Dual language learning specialist*
- h. Special education director or early intervention coordinator*
- i. Local early childhood curriculum and instruction specialist**

*While these roles are seemingly not directly related to decisions on instructional strategies, the design team participants noted that these roles have more impact on instruction than has been acknowledged in the past. Further, these roles have typically been siloed, and as in the words of one participant, “The whole idea here is to share the work. We need them there.”

**There were many variations on who these local early childhood specialists might be. If the district were collaborating with a Head Start, then representatives from that program would be essential. In other cases, it might be a representative from a larger local community-based program, or a local master trainer. In all cases, however, it was noted that it should be someone with deep and intimate knowledge of early childhood curriculum and instruction.

2. There were also consistent agreements on who would be “essential” for buy-in but not needed as core members of the team:
 - a. Superintendent: Needs to be a connector, visionary, and an advocate for alignment to occur.
 - b. School Board: Controls the budget and strategic planning.
 - c. Union: Controls the contract agreements for how teachers will be restructuring their time.
 - d. District Business Office: Manages the distribution of funds to partners that are critical to this project.
3. Those with expert insight on issues that are critical to school success were also cited as important to the work. For example, school counselors and nurses with knowledge of mental health and trauma-informed practices were named, but not broadly across each small group discussion. One design team participant noted that preschool through third grade conversations are so easy to broaden to the extent that the work feels insurmountable, and the participant reminded CI to maintain focus on instruction while keeping it broad enough to engage these important stakeholders.
4. One important finding is that the roles CI is bringing together do not necessarily indicate that these team members are explicitly adept at collaborating or thinking creatively in groups. Design team participants mentioned that the role of the facilitator will be crucial in establishing conditions of trust and innovation within the team.
5. Because of the nature of how large the team is, and the number of critical stakeholders, design team participants pointed out that there must be emphasis on the engagement strategy (how and when to engage with all these members).

Core Team in a Rural Community

Design team participants with expertise on rural districts made some important points for CI’s consideration.

It was pointed out that CI's questions reflect an orientation toward the capacity of larger and mid-sized districts. In extremely small districts, one person may be playing multiple roles, and, further, it is very difficult to draw on expertise outside of the community because of geographic distance and a lack of resources.

Rural districts must be very creative in order to meet their needs. Some strategies identified were to meet informally across multiple districts or bring in community leaders to help move the process forward. Participants noted that broader community buy-in is more important in a rural district.

Working with external partners has been extremely helpful for rural districts in that partners bring fresh voices into the process and offer new skills that might not be immediately available in a rural community.



Design team participant comments on an Early School Success district team in a rural community.

KEY FINDINGS REGARDING CHALLENGING THEMES FROM TEACHER FOCUS GROUPS

In the second small group activity, the design team had an opportunity to select one of five questions that elevated some of the challenging themes that emerged from RMC's teacher focus groups. The five questions were:

1. How can we ensure that preschool is consistently and systematically included with K–5 for improved vertical alignment?
2. How can we ensure that academics and social and emotional learning are integrated in preK–5 education so they are not competing?
3. How can we ensure that as an outside partner supporting districts, we help districts reexamine their systems of professional learning to be more responsive to teachers' needs?
4. How can we ensure that the district teams address disconnects between the district's guidance on instruction and teachers' knowledge and beliefs about instruction?
5. How can we ensure that teachers are given a stronger role in all aspects of the planning of professional learning?

The following are key findings from these discussions.

1. Consistent and systematic preK–5 inclusion.

One design team participant mentioned that there is data¹ indicating that when opportunities are created to just come together, teachers are eager to participate. Further, the data indicates that the relationships grow and develop positively.

There is broad recognition that principals are a critical link between preschool and elementary teachers. They set the tone, create opportunities, and recognize that early education is valuable.

The conversations around kindergarten readiness have caused much tension. Preschool teachers have been blamed for children not being “ready” for kindergarten, yet they described early elementary practices as inappropriate for very young children. Design team participants mentioned that there needs to be a different way to have a shared dialogue that looks at the strengths of various approaches.

2. Integrating social and emotional learning

Similar to the findings of the teacher focus groups, design team participants mentioned that district expectations regarding instructional minutes and lesson plans force teachers to stick to lessons rather than to be responsive to peer-to-peer interactions. Taking the time to respond to social and emotional needs is not valued within the system because it is not being measured.

Meanwhile, the design team participants shared expertise noting that social and emotional learning does not occur separately in distinct time periods outside of lessons: All cognitive functions combine in dynamic and interesting ways. Further, design team participants mentioned that professional development on the topic of social and emotional learning can sometimes “quarantine” social/emotional from academics. This creates a host of issues where a “lack of engagement is treated as compliance rather than true active learning.”

Discourses of school readiness also played a role in this conversation in that the participants shared the viewpoint that school and district policies often were counter-productive: Children being sent to SPED (pull-out, rather than inclusive practices), children being isolated for behavior problems, children deemed “unready,” and expulsions and suspensions as inappropriate solutions. These were identified as punitive measures rather than supportive to effectively meet children’s needs.

3. The role of outside partners

Outside partners come along with clear benefits: funding and resources. When resources come in the form of people from different fields, there are opportunities to discuss overlooked areas of research and have unique conversations. Partnerships can also force conversations around systems thinking.

¹Green, B.L., L. Patterson, M. Morris, L. Cochran, and C. Lambarth. 2015. “Year 2 Evaluation Report for the Kindergarten Readiness Partnership & Innovation Project.” Report submitted to the Oregon Early Learning Division.

<https://www.pdx.edu/ccf/sites/www.pdx.edu.ccf/files/KRPI%20Year%201%202014-15%20Report.pdf>

Outside partnerships also provide opportunities to have dedicated time for purposeful planning, which has been difficult to achieve when professional learning has been driven by budget concerns and time constraints rather than the needs of the teacher.

One concern regarding outside partners is determining whose knowledge and expertise should be prioritized. The promise of resources and supports confers expertise where it may not exist. This dynamic between the external partner and the district may have the unintended consequence of reinforcing unhealthy relationships and dynamics between school administrators and teachers. It is important to note that teaching is perceived as a caring profession led by women (25:1 ratios) and coaching is perceived as action-oriented profession led by men (1:1 ratios).

These gender dynamics must be investigated and carefully reconsidered as it can have profound impact on young children's learning. One participant questioned whether large class sizes would persist if this dynamic were changed and teacher's voices were lifted up to inform decisions. The goal should be to come to a place where teachers are trained in developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) and these concepts are re-introduced in K–3.

4. Disconnects between district guidance on instruction and teachers' knowledge of instruction

Design team participants, some of whom work at the district and state level, acknowledged that district guidance has been misinterpreted and misused. For example, 60 minutes of math instruction has been misinterpreted by educators as a requirement that young children do worksheets, which were not distributed by the district.

There was also an acknowledgement that district offices are not organized to be collaborative and there is incoherence in guidance. One participant shared that there is a “culture war” between valuing the “intrinsic humanness” of children versus a “punitive focus on outcomes, products, and regiments.”

The participants in this group also pointed out that the role of data needs to be revisited. On one hand the data reveals areas of concern, but on the other hand, educators are driven by the idea that what is measured is what is important. Identifying what is important to measure will change how children experience school.

5. Teachers engaged in planning of professional development

Design team participants mentioned that when teachers have opportunities to set their own professional learning goals, and those goals are authentically theirs, they are more ambitious than they are meeting goals put forth by a district or the state. This opportunity is not always available, because districts set professional learning goals, which leaves very little time to individualize the needs of teachers.

Self-reflection was discussed as a powerful tool for teachers, but this is typically not a practice that is systematically encouraged. Instead, systems of professional development can often feel like modes of compliance.

One of the more challenging issues regarding systems is that there are contractual agreements that vary from district to district around professional development. This is complicated by a disconnect between professional standards in early learning and K–12 education.

KEY FINDINGS REGARDING DISTRICT READINESS

In the third and final small group activity, the design team discussed three questions to help us determine a district's readiness:

1. What are the indicators of a district's readiness to take on preK–5 alignment?
2. What are the indicators of a district's ability to sustain preK–5 alignment?
3. How can Children's Institute best assess a district for these readiness and sustainability indicators to select the first districts to participate in the pilot?

The following are key findings from these discussions.

Indicators of readiness and sustainability

The design team identified the following characteristics of a district as potential readiness and sustainability indicators for the Early School Success site selection.

- Demonstrated commitment from all levels of the district (ex: teachers, principals, district administrators, school board).
- Core members of the team who have worked in the district for at least two years.
- Existing cross-disciplinary P–3 team.
- Demonstrated understanding of early childhood entities (ex: Licensing, Oregon Registry, Early Learning Hubs, SPARK).
- Articulated mission statement or strategic plan that demonstrates a commitment to early learning.
- Existing district plan that shows release time for all partners and how resources are allocated.
- Population that needs improved access to high quality preK.
- Positive district track record of collaboration and working with community partners.
- District level understanding or demonstration of commitment to learning about early childhood education.
- An articulated district-wide approach to DLL.
- Diversity in leadership.
- Evidence of Family Engagement and Inclusion Strategies.
- Excitement for the plan and strong motivation to participate.
- Existing preschool or preschool partnership.
- Strong district business office.
- Good union relationship with a lack of competing tensions.
- Elementary teachers that are noticing and responding to preK students.
- Leadership that is willing to reallocate existing resources.
- Some form of dedicated funding.
- Demonstrated willingness for innovation.
- Audit of current initiatives and resources that could tie in to this project.
- Current engagement with communities of color.
- Financial health.
- AVOID: "We're the best" attitude.
- AVOID: Absence of coaching/PD system.
- AVOID: Any type of remediation that limits flexibility.
- AVOID: Changes in leadership and turnover.
- AVOID: Contentious board, superintendent, or union negotiations.
- AVOID: Siloed programs and initiatives.

- AVOID: Commitment to too many competing initiatives.
- AVOID: Entrenched primary teachers.
- AVOID: No evidence of early learning programming.

Readiness in Rural Districts

Some design team participants expressed concern that conventional indicators of readiness would exclude rural districts from participating in the pilot. Many of the characteristics identified in other groups will not be present in a rural district or readiness may be demonstrated in creative unconventional ways.

For example, a strong willingness from the broader community was noted as an important readiness indicator but it may take time to determine the motivation of the community. Further, many of the roles articulated in the above indicators of readiness and sustainability may be filled informally through community leaders, or may need to be defined differently altogether given the specific needs of the community. With this being said, there was some agreement about how to identify some level of the district's readiness.

- Principal and superintendent support and authentic buy-in.
- Clear articulation of vision from principal about what they want to see in their school.
- P-3 team (formal or informal).
- Previous successful partnerships.
- Evidence of community support.
- Teachers open to evaluation.
- Coaching and professional learning that emphasizes learning, not performance.
- Empowered and engaged parents.
- Supportive environment for teachers where trust between teachers and administrators does not need to be rebuilt.
- AVOID: Turnover.
- AVOID: No willingness to do PD or to put PD into contracts.
- AVOID: No evidence of partnerships.

Assessing Readiness

Design team participants were clear about many of the benefits and challenges associated with an RFP process. Some of the benefits include the process's capacity to test the district's ability to handle a large partnership like the one described in Early School Success. The RFP process also positions the leadership to articulate and document processes that could lead to a smoother start if they are selected, and may help a district determine that the Early School Success project is not a good fit for them, leading them to opt out of applying. On the other hand, the RFP process can be slow and burdensome for the district.

The design team did articulate some specific ideas for identifying indicators of readiness and sustainability:

- The RFP can be done in two phases. The first phase would consist of open-ended questions to determine a school's willingness, demonstrated knowledge, and the district's current approach to early learning. A survey with specific questions about roles, existing professional learning structures, and organizational

structures could determine other specific readiness indicators. The second phase would include site visits to interview various “Core” and “Essential” team members.

- The RFP process must include a description of the specific school(s) that the district is considering for this project.
- A statement of commitment should be provided by all potential Early School Success team members including community partners.
- The RFP must clearly articulate what CI is trying to accomplish from the outset.
- The process should include a debrief with districts that are not selected to make sure the learning in the state continues to develop.
- The RFP process cannot be overly burdensome on districts.

Review of Design Year & Next Steps

The input received from both the design team and technical work group has been critical to ensuring that CI’s approach is not only grounded in research and best practices but also thoroughly vetted with early childhood and K–12 practice experts in Oregon. We have the opportunity to do something visionary that will not only impact local districts and have long-term implications for Oregon’s systems and policies, but also will have the potential to shape the national dialogue. In order to reach this goal, the research and design year entailed

- an extensive literature review
- site visits to five exemplary models working to align prekindergarten–third grade (Boston Public Schools, Chicago Parent Child Centers, New Schools (Chicago Public Schools), San Francisco Unified School District, SEAL Sobrato (Redwood City))
- consulting with 14 different national partners working on preschool alignments
- individual interviews with 52 education leaders and key stakeholders in Oregon
- convening teacher focus groups in six Oregon school districts
- convening technical work group and design team meetings
- synthesizing and analyzing stakeholder data and input

CI feels confident that your input will help to put forth a set of recommendations that meet Oregon districts where they are and will provide a blueprint for improving student outcomes with a targeted focus on ensuring all children are meeting third grade benchmarks. Through the rigorous and intentional research and design process, CI feels well informed and confident that we are driving towards establishing the conditions for an effective model. CI is submitting a proposal to the James and Marion Miller Foundation in early March and hope to have a rapid decision so that we can launch in fall of 2018.

As this chapter of the project closes, CI wants to extend the sincerest appreciation for the invaluable role you have played to ensuring this project is a success! CI looks forward to future collaboration and partnership.

Appendix A: Early School Success design team Agenda

Early School Success

DESIGN TEAM AGENDA

Thursday, December 14th, 2017
8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

	Agenda Item	Presenter/Discussant
8:30-9:00	Registration and optional networking breakfast	
9:00-9:20	Welcome and Introductions	Chris Tebben
9:20-10:10	RMC Teacher Focus Group Presentation	Margaret Beam Lauren Maxim, RMC Research
10:10-10:45	Small Group Discussion on Focus Group Key Takeaways	Chris Tebben
10:45-11:00	Break	All
11:00-12:00	PreK–5 th Alignment Presentation	Marina Merrill Soobin Oh
12:00-12:30	Lunch	All
12:30-1:00	PreK–5 th Alignment Presentation Q & A	Chris Tebben Marina Merrill Soobin Oh
1:00-2:00	Small group activity 1: Forming the ESS Alignment Team	Chris Tebben
2:00-3:00	Small group activity 2: Embedding Early Childhood PD in Elementary Settings	Chris Tebben
3:00-3:15	BREAK	All
3:15-4:15	Small group activity 3: District Readiness	Chris Tebben
4:15-4:30	Closing	Chris Tebben



Early School Success Technical Work Group Webinar

3:00 PM – 4:00 PM PST

February 8, 2018

Prepared by Children's Institute

Participating in the Webinar Chatroom

- Top right corner of the screen, there is an icon labeled “Chat.”
- Type your questions into the Chatroom and they will go directly to our Chatroom moderator.
- Questions will be answered at the end of our presentation.
- You can also type into the Chatroom if you have any technical issues.

Our Agenda

Agenda Item	
3:00 PM	Welcome
3:05 PM	Recap of Design Team Event
3:15 PM	Summary of Design Team Findings
3:45 PM	Conclusion
3:50 PM	Q & A
4:00 PM	Thank you!

Early School Success Timeline: Phases to Implementation

Design Year

August 2017-March 2018

August

- First Technical Workgroup

October

- Focus Groups Conducted

December

- Focus Groups Findings Reported
- Design Team Meeting

February

- Second Technical Workgroup Webinar

September

- Synthesize Findings
- Prepare for Focus Groups

November

- Focus Groups Completed
- Design Team Preparation

January

- Design Team Summary Report Prepared

March

- Design Year Recommendations Delivered
- Early School Success Pilot Implementation Proposal



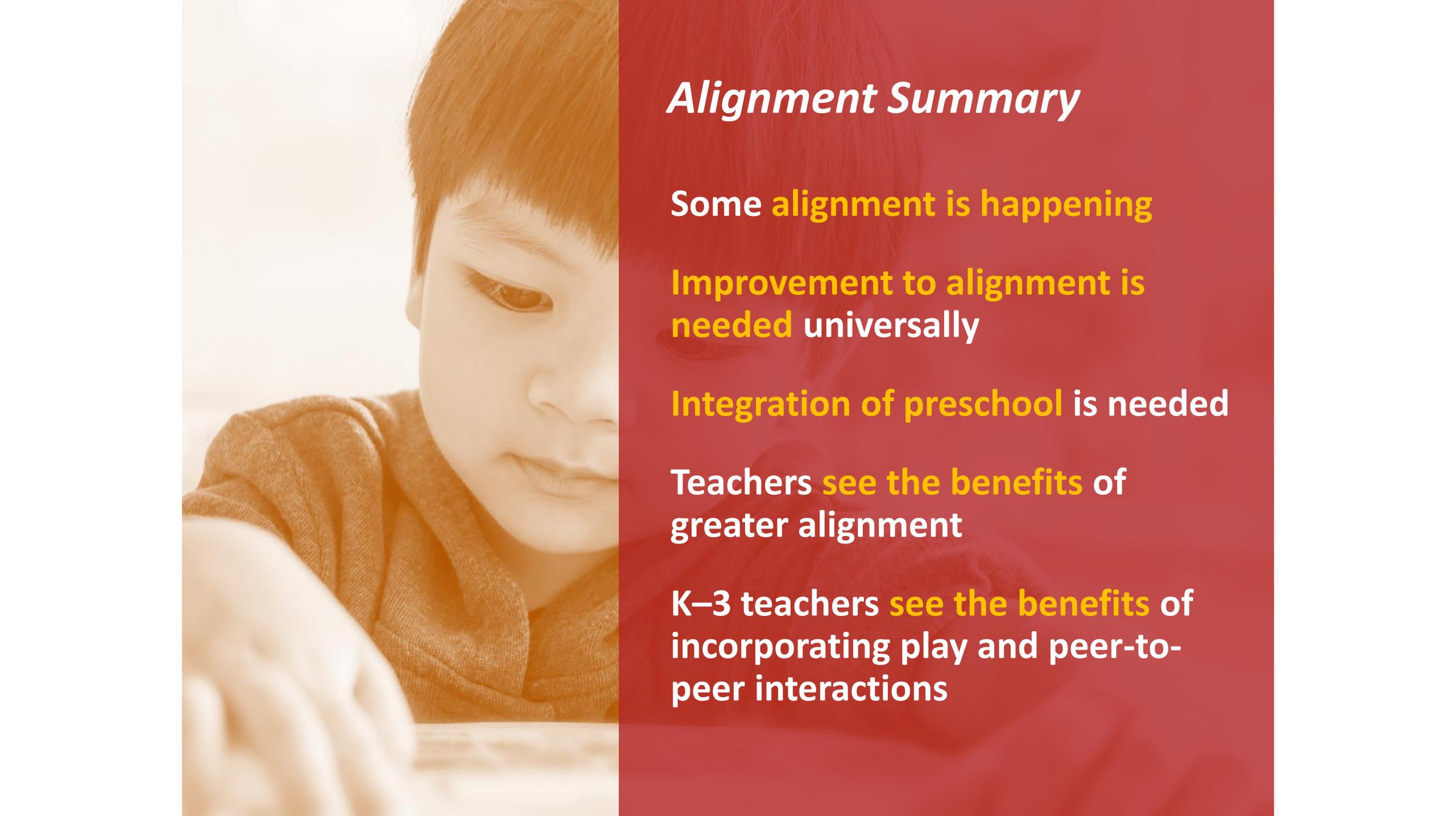


Link to RMC's
Cross Site
Summary sent to
your email

EARLY SCHOOL SUCCESS PROJECT

• *the teacher perspective* •

December 2017



Alignment Summary

Some **alignment is happening**

Improvement to alignment is needed universally

Integration of preschool is needed

Teachers **see the benefits** of greater alignment

K–3 teachers **see the benefits** of incorporating play and peer-to-peer interactions



Barriers to greater alignment and use of play and peer-to-peer interaction

District pressure to **meet standards and use required curriculum**

District **priority on instructional minutes** not social-emotional skills

Tension exists **between teachers' professional knowledge and district requirements**

Limitations of required curriculum, lack of time, and large class sizes



Professional development preferences and barriers

Teachers prefer **teacher-driven content** and **time to process with colleagues**

Teachers want **coaching and touchbacks** after trainings

Some cross-grade professional development is useful

Barriers include **district pressures, new curricula and initiatives that fill PD time, and lack of teacher time**



The background features a whiteboard covered in various sticky notes and handwritten notes. In the top left, names like 'Don', 'Nancy', 'Meera', and 'Sally' are written. Other notes include 'The why of align', 'Lead', 'Stages of human development - progression of knowledge & skills', 'Listening + Learning', 'diff', 'outcomes', 'student indicators - beware of tests', 'continuous improvement for professional practice', 'don't capture ability to think', 'Data to...', 'of System', 'Changes have ha...', 'Pre-K +', 'How to keep parents & what resources', 'User-centered des...', 'on nearby needs assess...', 'Promote non-innovative & exper...', 'Listen to people who to carry co-cr...', 'Beware thinking that we have to get every child at same place at same time - doesn't work for resources of...', 'Promote non-innovative & exper...', 'Listen to people who to carry co-cr...', 'Beware thinking that we have to get every child at same place at same time - doesn't work for resources of...'

Describing the Pilot

Early School Success Goals



Aligned instruction from preK to 5th grade

Job-embedded and meaningful professional learning with a focus on teachers and administrators

Systems and cultures that support continuous improvement

Intentional teaching that fosters optimal growth and development

Effective and coordinated partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders including families

Advocacy and communication strategies to address policy barriers

The Task of the ESS Alignment Team:

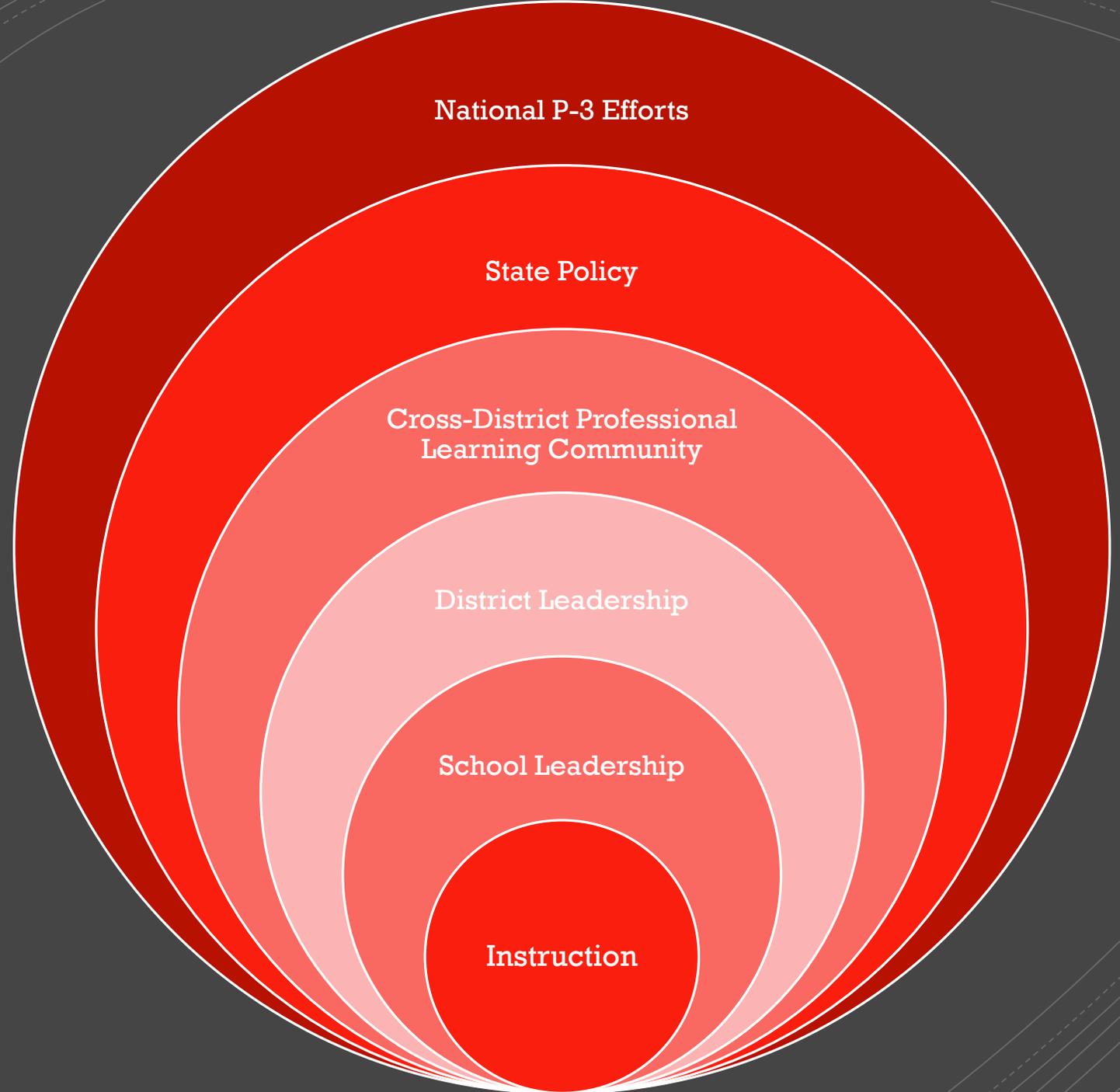
Fully Supported
and Intentional
Instructional
Strategies



Core Features of Early School Success Pilot

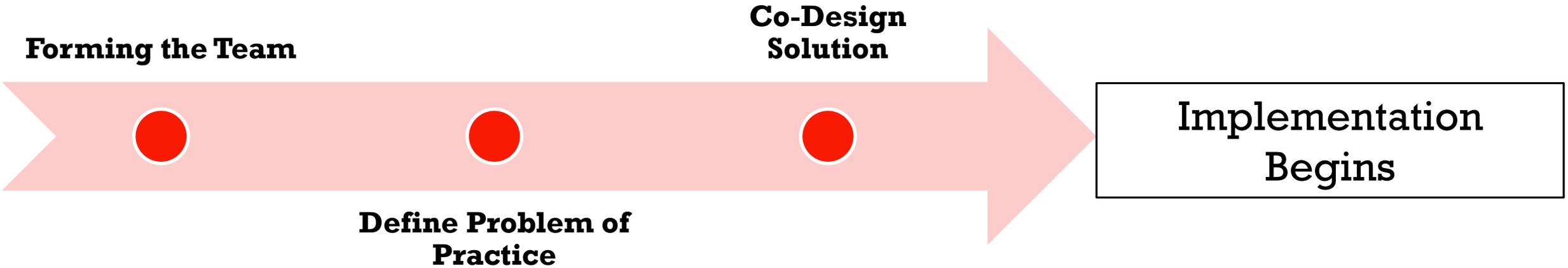
- Facilitated 5 year process
- 2-4 pilot districts
- A laser focus on P-5 **classroom instruction** guided by learning and cognitive sciences
- **Family engagement** as a foundational strategy for academic success
- Reorganized **professional learning structures** for teachers
- **Professional learning for district administrators and school administrators** on the topic of early childhood teaching and learning
- Implementation will include built in cycles of **community-needs assessments, evaluation, research, and continuous improvement.**
- Membership in the Early School Success **cross-district professional learning community.**
- Creation of **state policy advisory team.**

Fitting into a
larger context



The Planning Year:

First Year* of 5-year Implementation



*Planning year may take longer than a year depending on context or depth of need

Don
Nancy
Meera
Jalie
Martha
Queen

Marissa
Meghan
Andrea
Elin

Listening + Learning
diffs
Student indicators
of continuous improvement
for professional practice

open/transparent
relevance

Dev Approp

Family engaged thought
Spikes
Changes have happened
↓
How to keep parents involved
& what messages are sent to
User-Centered design
Community needs assess.

Listen to people who help you
to carry co-created model forward

Summary of Design Team Findings



Three Overarching Questions

Which roles are essential to include in the project leadership team for the Year 1 planning process?

Key Findings Regarding the Core Team

How will we address the challenging tensions presented by RMC research in the teacher focus groups?

Key Findings Regarding Challenging Themes from Teacher Focus Groups

What would indicate a district's readiness to take on this pilot program, and what might indicate that a district should avoid taking on this pilot program?

Key Findings Regarding District Readiness

**1. Key Findings
Regarding the Core
Team**

“Essential” for Buy-In

- Superintendent
- School Board
- Union
- District Business Office

“Core” Team

- Principals
- Preschool teacher representatives
- Elementary teacher representatives
- District curriculum coordinators
- District professional development coordinators
- P-3 or early childhood coordinator
- Dual language learning specialist
- Special education director or early intervention coordinator
- Local early childhood curriculum and instruction specialist*
- Family engagement coordinator*
- Community engagement coordinator*

**Important for Success of
Project**

- Parents and Parent Leaders
- Focused Network Coordinators
- Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA)
- Paraprofessionals
- ESD Liaison
- Department of Education
- Early Learning Division
- A person responsible for data
- Pediatrician, School Nurse, School Counselor
- Federal Program Coordinator

2. *Key Findings
Regarding
Challenging Themes
from Teacher Focus
Groups*

1. How can we ensure that preschool is consistently and systematically included with K-5 for improved vertical alignment?

2. How can we ensure that academics and social and emotional learning are integrated in P-5 education so they are not competing?

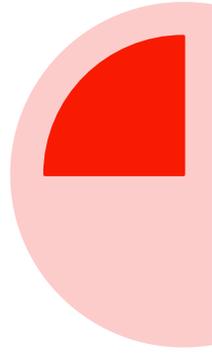
3. How can we ensure that as an outside partner supporting districts, we help districts reexamine their systems of professional learning to be more responsive to teachers' needs?

4. How can we ensure that the district teams address disconnects between the district's guidance on instruction and teachers' knowledge and beliefs about instruction?

5. How can we ensure that teachers are given a stronger role in all aspects of the planning of professional learning?

3. *Key Findings Regarding District Readiness*

Indicators of Readiness and Sustainability



Demonstration of commitment from all levels of the district (ex: teachers, principals, district administrators, school board).

Elementary teachers that are noticing and responding to PreK students.

Core members of the team have worked in the district for at least two years.

Leadership willingness to reallocate existing resources

An existing cross-disciplinary P-3 team.

Some form of dedicated funding

Demonstrated understanding of early childhood entities (ex: Licensing, Oregon Registry, Early Learning Hubs, SPARK).

Demonstration of a willingness for innovation.

An articulated mission statement or strategic plan that demonstrates a commitment to early learning.

An audit of current initiatives and resources that could tie in to this project.

An existing district plan that shows release time for all partners and how resources are allocated.

Current engagement with communities of color

District serves a population that needs improved access to high quality preK.

Financially healthy district

Positive district track record of collaboration and working with community partners.

District level understanding or demonstration of commitment to learning about early childhood education.

An articulated district wide approach to DLL.

Diversity in leadership.

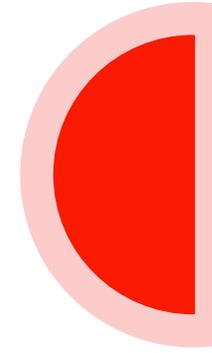
Evidence of Family Engagement and Inclusion Strategies

Excitement for the plan/Strong motivation to participate

An existing preschool or preschool partnership.

A strong district business office.

A good union relationship with lack of competing tensions.



Red Flags

AVOID: "We're the best" attitude

AVOID: Absence of coaching/PD system

AVOID: Any district in any type of remediation that limits flexibility.

AVOID: Changes in leadership and turnover

AVOID: Contentious board, superintendent, or union negotiations

AVOID: Districts where everything is siloed

AVOID: Districts who are committed to too many competing initiatives.

AVOID: Entrenched primary teachers.

AVOID: No evidence of early learning programming.



Thank You!